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THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF SUBJECT, FORM, AND POINT OF VIEW, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE LAST, IS THE CONCERN OF THIS 10TH-GRADE LITERATURE UNIT. BACKGROUND INFORMATION, STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS ARE PROVIDED FOR SIX SHORT STORIES REPRESENTING VARIED POINTS OF VIEW--(1) H.G. WELLS' "THE COUNTRY OF THE BLIND," (2) O. HENRY'S "A DOUBLE-DYED DECEIVER," (3) STEPHEN CRANE'S "A MYSTERY OF HEROISM," (4) AMBROSE BIERCE'S "JUPITER DOKE, BRIGADIER GENERAL," (5) ALAN SILLITOE'S "ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON," AND (6) WALLACE STEGNER'S "BUTCHER BIRD." SEE ALSO ED 010 129 THROUGH ED 010 160, ED 010 803 THROUGH ED 010 832, TE 000 195 THROUGH TE 000 220, AND TE 000 227 THROUGH TE 000 249. (MM)

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SHORT STORIES

Literature Curriculum IV

Teacher Version

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SHORT STORIES

The Country of the Blind

A Double - Dyed Deceiver

A Mystery of Heroism

Jupiter Doke, Brigadier General

On Saturday Afternoon

Butcher Bird

INTRODUCTION

In this tenth grade unit on the short story we hope that your students can reinforce their understanding of the interrelationship between the three basic terms of this curriculum. Since the eleventh grade is concerned primarily with the formal characteristics of the various genres, and the twelfth grade deals with problems of literary taste and judgment, the tenth grade is the last opportunity to give primary consideration to the reciprocal relationship between Subject, Form, and Point of View.

While the study questions following the stories deal with all three terms, perhaps the best way to bring out the main point of the unit is to emphasize Point of View and its relation to Subject and Form. The stories we have selected give a representative range of the possibilities open to an author: the subjective narrative of Sillitoe's "On Saturday Afternoon," the limited omniscient viewpoint of Stegner's "Butcher Bird," the objectivity of the epistolary form of Bierce's "Jupiter Doke, Brigadier General," and the more common omniscient narrative stance of Wells, Crane, and O. Henry.

In discussion with your students, make sure that they understand the importance of considering the point of view from which a story is written. An author permits us to see as much as he wishes of the fictional world that he creates--and no more. And the angle of vision--the point of view--that we have into the fictional world is one of the main things that controls our preception of the subject of the work, as well as the form it takes. In "A Mystery of Heroism," for instance, it is Crane himself as omniscient narrator who comments on the action and describes the feelings of the soldier under fire. Necessarily so, for it would be out of character for the simple, unlettered soldier to formulate such ideas for himself. In the same way, the concentration in "Butcher Bird" on the consciousness of the boy determines for us what Stegner's subject really is--the child's imperfect but growing awareness of an adult world of complex motives and emotions.

In general, the students will probably find it easier to see the relation between Point of View and Form than that between Point of View and Subject. Perhaps the best way to help them see the latter is to ask them to try to cast the story in some other point of view--"A Mystery of Heroism" from the autobiographical viewpoint of the soldier; "On Saturday Afternoon" from the omniscient viewpoint. In this way they will begin to see that examination of point of view is merely a more complicated approach to one of the central theses of this curriculum, and one that they first met in the seventh grade: the way a thing is said is part of what is being said.

"The Country of the Blind"

by H. G. Wells

This story, by one of England's masters of the suspense tale, is an intriguing and provocative story about a man who inadvertently discovers some facts about human nature.

The story is set in the Andes in Ecuador. Wells gives his reader an early sense of location, dwelling at some length on the legend of the lost valley, arousing on one hand a sense of anticipation and at the same time establishing a plausible background. The valley, settled by some hardy Peruvians, is walled off from the rest of the world by a gigantic earthquake. One of the inhabitants, who has gone to obtain help in the fight against a strange malady, tells of the valley. The story becomes a legend in the succeeding years, a legend of a "Country of the Blind", where the inhabitants have been blinded by some hereditary illness. (This portion of the tale is hardly incredible. Only recently news stories have called our attention to a large area in the interior of Mexico where the natives are almost all blind as a result of the untreated bite of a certain fly.)

Wells needs to establish that these people have lost all contact with the world of sight. We are told that fifteen generations have passed since the last of the "seeing" has died. Into this limited, curiously self-sufficient and satisfying world, the mountain climber Nunez drops, quite literally, by accident.

The avenues of communication between the two are totally blocked, for the unseeing cannot understand the world of sight. With telling irony Wells speaks of the refusal to accept the idea of a world other than their own. The blind consider such an idea heresy and decide that Nunez, who moves clumsily in the world of the blind, is hardly human. They do not like the idea of Medina-sarote marrying this strange person and possibly corrupting the race.

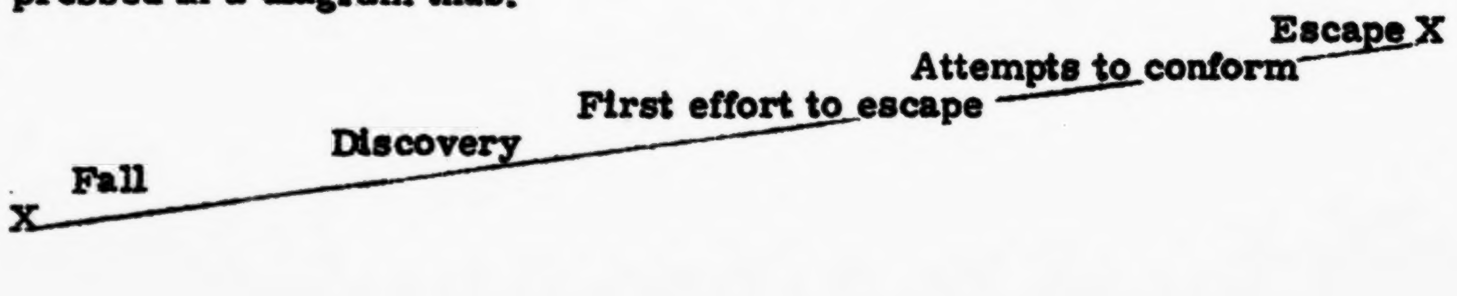
You can handle the various themes to suit the responsiveness of your class, of course. There is no doubt that Wells is commenting with some bitterness on religion, education, and tolerance.

Perhaps the most ironic points of the story involve Nunez, who almost allows himself to be blinded in order to be accepted--and because he cannot, he finds, strike back at the blind. "He began to realize that you cannot even fight happily with creatures who stand upon a different mental basis with yourself." The difficulty of fighting prejudice, bias, and untruth is doubly hard, not only because there is no common meeting ground of the opponents, but also because the thinking man--or "seeing" man--does feel pity; his understanding brings him tolerance, and sometimes because of it, defeat.

It is perhaps noteworthy that Nunez makes good his escape from the valley only when he sees the desire of the men to destroy sight as a sin. Not even for love, he decides, is he willing to destroy his own freedom, symbolized by his ability to see.

How many "Countries of the Blind" exist today in our own turbulent and changing society! Many "ordered" little realms with "smooth ceilings" exist, and the ceiling over these worlds effectively shuts out new ideas.

But whether or not the class undertakes a discussion, it will be profitable to have them look closely at the form of this story. Pay particular attention to the beginning. Just how does Wells prepare us for this story? Why is so much space devoted to location and background? How is the tale made believable? How is suspense maintained? Out of such a discussion can grow an understanding of the structure of this story. From the initial incident the story moves with clear-cut exactness to a conclusion. It might be expressed in a diagram thus:



The point of view is third person, although it is Wells we hear speaking as the story opens. We "see" the story largely through the eyes of the author. It is interesting to observe the point of view of the sightless and the seeing worlds. In fact, it is upon the reader's sensitivity to this latter point that the meaning of the story must rest. It will be worthwhile to question the students closely here. How does Nunez see these people? Is he not arrogant in his superiority? What could Wells be saying here? How do these sightless people respond to Nunez? Why can they not understand his world? Finally, the student should consider his own point of view. Does he see both sides? What is his attitude?

The subject, to return to the opening remarks, is clearly two-fold. It is about the Andes, dangerous ledges, cold and lonely wastes. It is about adventure, danger, excitement, and suspense. Yet is is just as surely a story concerned with freedom, with what freedom is, how it can be lost and how it can be recovered. It is clearly concerned with man's talent at building "ceilings" to limit creativity and thought and with his sometimes grotesque inability to understand a view different from his own.

It is this two-fold subject that makes "The Country of the Blind" an exciting story to read and a satisfying one to teach.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Can you explain the significance of the first three paragraphs? Just what information do they include? Is it necessary? In what way does it prepare us for what is to follow?

2. The fourth paragraph contains the "beginning" of the action. What are we told here about the hero? How much more do we know about him when the story closes?

3. Why is there a shift in point of view after the third paragraph?

4. Is the accident that precipitates the story credible? In what way?

5. Find the description of the valley. In what way did the valley seem strange to Nunez?

6. Why do you think Wells inserted the old proverb about the one-eyed man? Does this tale prove it to be true or false? Explain.

7. How did the blind people regard Nunez? Is it fair to say that neither understood the other? Explain.

8. Read the sentences beginning "Blind men of genius. . ." and concluding with ". . .New and saner explanations." Is this irony? Explain. Find other examples of irony.

9. Why did Nunez have such difficulty explaining sight to these people? Can you think of any way that would have been more effective?

10. First Nunez tried persuasion. Then he used force. How did the latter method succeed?

11. When did Nunez's smugness give way to despair?

12. Why did Nunez return after his first effort to escape?

13. What was demanded of him? Why were these demands made?

14. Why did Yacob and the others dislike the idea of Nunez marrying Medina-sarote?

15. What did the doctor conclude caused Nunez to be different?

16. The doctor said that Nunez would be an admirable citizen and "sane" once his eyes were removed. What irony do you see here?

17. Do you think that Wells feels a good citizen should conform to everything about him and be agreeable? How do you know what the author thinks?

18. Read the four one-sentence paragraphs near the end of the story. What purpose do they serve?

19. Is the valley symbolical, do you think? If so, of what? Why is Nunez content to lie on the mountains, not even looking at the beauty of the night? What do you think the mountain symbolizes?

20. Read the last two paragraphs again. Notice the visual imagery. Has this been noticeable before? Can you explain this?

21. Can you see any difference between point of view as attitude and point of view as narrative technique?

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Have you ever had difficulty communicating an idea to someone? If you have one point of view toward a controversial subject and your friend another, why is it important for you to "see" (not necessarily agree with) his point of view? Do you know people who are blind to any ideas other than their own? Explain in a paragraph why it is important for people to be able to see other views than their own.

2. In order to see for yourself the different worlds Nunez and the blind men "saw," describe the valley as it appeared to Nunez and then describe it as it seemed to the inhabitants. Remember to use concrete details and to be specific.

3. Try to visualize the little nation, the "Country of the Blind." Make a map showing the village, the farmland, the meadows, and the surrounding mountains. Then, using your map as a guide, write a paragraph describing the valley. In your Rhetoric Units last year, you learned to use certain organizing principles in your writing. Which would be most effective here?

4. When he discovered the valley, Nunez recalled the saying, "In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King." Think this statement over. What do you think it implies? Write a paragraph explaining what you think this means.

A DOUBLE-DYED DECEIVER

by O. Henry

INTRODUCTION

The problem of finding suitable selections for reluctant readers is a familiar one for most teachers. We have chosen this story by O. Henry because we believe the lively plot will sustain the interest of even the very slow readers, and so minimize any difficulties presented by the vocabulary.

Not all of the questions will be suitable for low track students, however, and you will have to decide how far your students will be able to go. Better students will profit from the more detailed study, and they should be encouraged to compare this story that relies so heavily on plot manipulation with other stories they have read, and so arrive at some kind of value judgment about its literary worth.

The story should probably be read straight through; any vocabulary difficulties should be cleared up before beginning a class discussion. You will probably want to be sure the students understand the significance of the title. With slower students, it might be a good idea to have someone give a brief synopsis of the plot to be sure they have grasped all the important incidents before you begin to talk about the ideas raised by the study questions.

Since the questions themselves and the brief answers given here probably cover most of the points you will want to explore, no further explication is included for this story.

THE AUTHOR

William Sidney Porter, who became celebrated as a short story writer using the pen name of O. Henry, was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1862. There he worked as a drug store clerk until he moved to Texas. It was while he was employed as a bank teller in Austin that he was charged with embezzlement and fled to Central America. His wife's illness caused him to return, and in 1897 he was convicted and sentenced to three years in the Federal Penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio. While in prison he began writing short stories under the name of O. Henry. The last ten years of his life were spent in New York where he continued to write stories at the rate of two a month, and sometimes more. "A Double-Dyed Deceiver" is from a collection called Roads of Destiny, published during this period of his life.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you suppose that O. Henry did not reveal until the end of the story that the man the Kid had killed in Laredo was the Urique heir? Is there any clue earlier in the story that might have led you to this conclusion? If this piece of information had been put in the beginning, would the story have been as interesting? --The surprise at the end of the story makes a powerful impression upon the reader. Students

will probably agree that had they known in advance the identity of the Kid's victim, the end of the story would not have been a surprise and therefore would have lost its effectiveness.
Some students may have seen a clue in the sentence following Thacker's description of the tattoo mark on young Urique's hand. "The Kid raised his left hand slowly and gazed at it curiously." This may have raised the question in their minds, but it is certainly not conclusive.

2. Is the Kid's change of heart at the end of the story convincing? Are you convinced of his concern for his "mother" that makes him stay on in the role of Francisco Urique? Is there a possibility that he had planned in advance to maintain his new identity? Can you find evidence in the story to support your opinion? --Of course we cannot be sure, but it seems highly probable that the Kid intended all along to make a permanent place for himself with the Uriques. The fact that he did not confide in Thacker at the time the tattoo was first mentioned leads us to suppose he had a reason for keeping this knowledge to himself. All the evidence in the story would indicate the Kid is not a person to consider other people, so the motivation for his change of heart is weak. He undoubtedly enjoyed his new position and took delight in Thacker's helpless frustration. However, a good case could be made from his speech to Thacker telling how he must protect Señora Urique from further hurt, to support the opposing view that he is a redeemed character. Students should be encouraged to discuss this problem.

3. How many examples of coincidence can you find in the story? Are the coincidences plausible? What part do they play in shaping the story? --This is a good opportunity to let the students recognize O. Henry's dependence upon plot manipulation to achieve results. The action does not consistently grow out of the choices of his characters, but depends heavily upon coincidence. The most obvious coincidence placed the Kid in the house of the man he had killed. It was another coincidence that he arrived in Corpus Christi just in time to sail on the ship that took him to Buenas Tierras. It was a coincidence that the Kid resembled the slain man in age and appearance, and also that he spoke fluent Spanish. It was coincidence that brought him to the office of a corrupt official on the lookout for someone just like the Kid, and who also by coincidence knew the art of tattooing.

4. What do you know about the Kid? Do you follow his story with any emotion? Why or why not? Is this deliberate on the part of the author, or is it a weakness in the story? --We know little about the Kid except that he was a typical "juvenile delinquent" of his day. Forced at an early age to fend for himself, he arrived at a precocious wisdom of the ways of the world. He was quick with a gun and boasted an unsavory reputation along the Rio Grande border. We do not become emotionally involved with him because the author never reveals him as a living person, but rather tells his story in the detached and impersonal manner of the old balladeers. He neither sympathizes nor passes judgment, but simply relates the events as they happen.

5. Most literary works have subjects that can be discussed on various levels, apart from the story line itself. The ideas, or abstract subjects,

are usually about important aspects of human existence. Are there any such ideas conveyed through this story? If so, do they seem significant to you? --The story deals with flight from justice and with deception, but these ideas seem to lose their significance because justice does not triumph and the deception is allowed to succeed. This goes against our deepest human instincts. While we do not feel sorry for Thacker when he is double-crossed, we are a little uneasy about the Kid getting away with murder at the expense of the Urique family. Some of the students may feel that his changed motives redeem the situation, and a good class discussion might arise from this question. Must a man always pay for his sins?

6. Much of the story is told through dialogue. What do the Kid's conversations with both Captain Boone and Thacker reveal about all three characters? What else does O. Henry accomplish through this method of story telling?--Dialogue helps to make the story more plausible. The characters speak like real people, so we accept them more readily as true to life, even though they are merely conventional types or stock characters. The conversation also serves to inform the reader of plans and arrangements quickly and consisely without wasting words on lengthy descriptions and explanations.

7. Look again at the beginning of the story. Compare the style of this language with the conversations you have just discussed. Does it seem appropriate to the subject of the story? Now that you know how the story ends, can you see any reason for O. Henry to adopt this tone in the beginning? Does it in any way reveal the author's attitude toward his subject?--In the opening paragraph of his story, O. Henry uses language much too flowery and pompous to suit his subject. It is every bit as false and artificial as the Kid's motives when he first assumes the identity of Francisco Urique. The author seems to be warning the reader not to be deceived by appearances, which often serve only to conceal the reality.

8. Why does the author suddenly jump from the Kid boarding the ship to his calling on Thacker in his office, without any transition whatsoever? Later in the story, a whole month elapses between the ending of one paragraph and the beginning of the next. Does this remind you of any other type of literature you have studied? How does this technique contribute to the effect the author is trying to produce?--Since the author omits everything not directly connected with the action of his story, he has simply ignored the journey as well as the month spent by the Kid in the Urique household before the end of the story. But these are abrupt omissions, not handled with the artistry of many other short story writers. O. Henry's method rather resembles melodrama, with its exaggerated focus upon the plot, which keeps the reader caught up in the action and discourages him from asking questions or passing judgments, while the author manipulates his story toward the surprise ending.

9. Which of the characters appear to be types or stock characters? What details has O. Henry used to suggest this impression?--Captain Boone, with his talk of "capstanfooted lubbers" is a typical tobacco-chewing, profane old salt. Thacker is the standard type of alcoholic petty government official, placed where he can do least harm, through either bun-

gling or dishonesty. Señor Urique is simply a shadow character, "a tall man with a white moustache." His wife is the conventional Spanish beauty, now middle-aged and sad, dressed in black like the melodrama heroine wronged by the villain. The Kid himself is a stock character, the card-playing, saloon-haunting drifter, eager for a fight and quick on the draw.

10. Has the author sentimentalized the character of Señora Urique? (Better look this word up in your dictionary.) How does this affect your attitude to the deception the Kid uses on her?--The gay Señora Urique, happily dressed in white lace and ribbons, is no more convincing a character than her former sad self, dressed in deep mourning. The account of her tears and attentions, told by the Kid, is sheer melodrama. It is difficult to feel pity for a shadow.

11. Does the title prepare you for the outcome of the story? Is the ending a satisfying one? Give reasons for your answers.--The title does give a clue to the ending of the story, but it is not necessarily a satisfying outcome, for the reasons discussed in question 5.

12. What are the major conflicts of the story? How are they used to build suspense?--Suspense is built early in the story when the Kid is being pursued by friends of his victim, and the reader is not sure he will make good his escape. The major conflict of course exists between Thacker and the Kid, even though for a while they appear to be aligned together against the unsuspecting Uriques. Suspense is heightened at the end when the action is fast. Thacker has admitted defeat, the Urique carriage is heard outside, and the Kid reveals that he has taken the place of the man he killed--all in the last half of the page!

13. Explain the allusion to the Prodigal Son. Why is it ironic used in this story? What other examples of irony can you find?--Most students will be familiar with the biblical parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11). They should be able to appreciate the irony of the usurper, deliberately fleeching the deceived parents, quite unlike the repentant son in the bible story who asks only to be given a servant's position. The irony of Señora Urique mothering her son's murderer will surely be mentioned by the students, and some may see irony in the Kid's assuming the identity of a despised "greaser" so insignificant that shooting one doesn't even count along the border. There is also irony in the Kid's changed motives at the end, assuming he is sincere in his desire to spare his "mother" further heartache.

14. What impression does this story leave you with? What popular form of modern entertainment does it resemble? Is it close to real life? Do you think it was intended to be?--Students will probably recognize the familiar pattern of the TV Western in this story. It is escape literature, unrealistic, and not at all involved with the issues of real life. The twist at the end probably left the strongest impression, for after all it was designed to be entertaining.

15. How many instances of deception can you find in the story? Is the Kid the only deceiver?--By openly going to the station and boarding the

train, then quietly slipping off and stealing a horse, the Kid began his career of deception. Next he deceived Thacker by letting him assume they were partners in a plan to rob the Uriques. Finally he deceived the Uriques by pretending to be their long-lost son. However, he practiced his deception with a difference at the end of the story, if we accept at face value his change of heart concerning Señora Urique.

Thacker too is guilty of deception. By tattooing the Urique family crest on the back of the Kid's hand, and then writing an untruthful letter to Señor Urique, he further complicates the web of falsehood.

16. (For better students.) Relate the following critical evaluation to "The Double - Dyed Deceiver": In O. Henry's stories there is always a working criss-cross, a plot of cross purposes. There usually is a series of cheap jokes, laundered and expanded. He gives you a peep at life but it is hasty, flippant, superficial, and written for sensational effects. But he is a waster trickster, a player with incidents and words.

"A Mystery of Heroism"

by Stephen Crane

INTRODUCTION

In selecting "A Mystery of Heroism" to be included in the tenth grade short story unit, we feel we have found a short story, simple in style, that will appeal to slower readers, while at the same time it is significant enough to challenge perceptive minds.

The questions are grouped mainly around the concepts of Subject, Form, and Point of View, but not all students will be able to answer every question, and you will need to extract what is useful for your particular class.

THE AUTHOR

The fourteenth child of a methodist minister, Stephen Crane was born in 1871, six years after the end of the Civil War. Although he had never seen war when he wrote his best known novel, The Red Badge of Courage, it is a realistic reproduction of a Civil War battle, and a young man's psychological response to combat. It won immediate acclaim, and established his reputation on both sides of the Atlantic.

His formal education, which included brief studies at Lafayette College and Syracuse Univerity, was less influential upon his writing career than the time he spent as a journalist in New York. This was the training that taught him to see and feel raw humanity so vividly that he was later able to reproduce it graphically in his impressionistic style.

Interested in the psychology of combat, he went first to Greece and then to Cuba as a war correspondent. On one of these voyages his ship sank in sight of land; later he used this experience to write his famous short story "The Open Boat."

Something of a rebel, he married a woman of questionable repute, and spent the last years of his short life in England. He was neglectful of his health, and often even careless about his safety. He died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-nine.

Although he was a prolific writer, only a few of Crane's stories are anthologized today; "The Open Boat," "the Blue Hotel," and "The Brides Comes to Yellow Sky" being the ones most frequently used. In spite of his penchant for metaphor, there is a simplicity in his style that is later echoed by Hemingway, and that gives his writing a modern tone. The contrived effect for which Poe strove is entirely missing in Crane. His stories are more often what Henry James called a "situation revealed," with greater emphasis upon character development and human motives, often ironically understated.

"A Mystery of Heroism" was the most successful of the stories collected under the title "The Little Regiment," and first published in 1896.

Suggestions for Teaching the Story

"A Mystery of Heroism" relates an incident of the Civil War. It is a typical Crane story which exposes the inner crisis of a man facing death. The conflict lies in the struggle between the man's need to maintain dignity and at least the outward appearance of courage, and the external circumstances of chance that force action upon him. In some respects it is a capsule version of the same theme as that developed in The Red Badge of Courage.

Allow the students time to read the story all the way through before beginning any class discussion. It may be necessary to explain a few terms that are not commonly used today. Students may not know, for instance, that the "swing" team was the middle pair of horses in a team of six, or that caissons were wagons for transporting ammunition.

Just how you will go about discussing the story will depend largely upon the class, and their response to it. The following questions, together with possible answers, are given for your convenience to suggest possible avenues of approach. They do not represent an exhaustive treatment of the story, but it is hoped that they may serve as a springboard for a fruitful discussion and analysis.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does the story follow the typical narrative pattern of beginning, middle, and end? What are the main events in the order in which they happened? Do these events by themselves provide the main interest of the story? Why or why not? - The story does not follow a typical chronological pattern. Crane presents us with an impression of the battlefield by focusing his descriptive powers upon detail after detail, rather like a movie camera switching rapidly from scene to scene, concentrating an experience for the benefit of an audience. As he is presented for the first time, Collins is merely one of the details, a nondescript private wishing he had a drink of water. The scene shifts quickly back to the meadow, then to the wounded artillery officer, over to the ruined house, and back to the stricken artillery unit. It is against this background that we are asked to view the action--the men laughing at Collins and egging him on to get the water, Collins being goaded into action, getting permission from the officer, walking across the meadow with the men's canteens, filling the bucket, and running clumsily back

with the water. The main interest in the story, however, lies not in the action itself, but in the psychological revelation of Collins's reaction to his circumstances, and the illumination of the nature of heroism.

2. On the surface level, the story is about a soldier who goes after some water in the middle of a battle field. What is the subject on a deeper level? - Heroism, of course, is the obvious idea developed through the story, but students may see a more general underlying theme. The meaning of life itself may be held up for examination. How significant are the choices a man makes in the face of external circumstance beyond his control, even including his own inherited nature?

3. Why does Collins go after the water? Is his action entirely voluntary, or do circumstances beyond his control force him into it? - Crane does not tell us exactly why Collins risks his life for water. In fact Collins himself seems to be surprised by his own action. Certainly the jeering of his comrades precipitated it, since his pride compelled him to prove he was not afraid. But why should he prove it under those conditions? To fear is human, and every man has known fear. Bravado compelled him to ask permission from the officer, but perhaps he hoped permission would be denied, thus saving face for him. Permission having been granted, he seemed powerless to change his mind. "It seemed to him supernaturally strange that he had allowed his mind to maneuver his body into such a situation." The class might discuss the power of other people's opinions over our decisions, and the extent to which we should allow them to influence us.

4. Have you ever known anyone like Fred Collins? Does he strike you as being a real person? Read again Crane's description of Collins's feelings as he crossed the battle field. Is it plausible? You may remember Saint-Exupéry made a similar discovery when he found he was quite without emotion as he battled the storm in his plane. Talking about the experience afterwards, in "The Elements" from Wind, Sand and Stars, he said:

> "There is nothing dramatic in the world, nothing pathetic, except in human relations."

In other words, horror is not present while something happens; it can only be looked at with horror afterwards. Why do you think terror struck Collins as he filled the water canteen? - Some students may have had an experience they would be willing to relate when at the time they felt nothing--a close escape from injury or death in a car accident, for example. They will probably agree that Collins's reaction is a typically human one. Fear struck him as he filled the bucket because he had time to reflect upon the significance of what he had done, and a growing realization dawned upon him that he might not make it back to the relative safety of the hill. Although we know nothing about Collins or his background, this true-to-life revelation of his feelings in the face of danger makes us accept him as a plausible character.

5. Was Collins really a hero, or was his action foolish? Is there any element of true heroism in his action? What is the difference between courage and foolhardiness? - There will very likely be differences of opinion about the meaning of heroism. Most of the class will probably

agree that returning to the dying officer and giving him a drink was truly heroic, even though the man died, because in spite of his fear he tried to help a human being in need. But risking his life for a drink of water when there was no danger of dying from thirst was foolhardy rather than brave. Motives and value judgments must be examined in distinguishing heroism from bravado.

6. Why is heroism a mystery? Discuss the appropriateness of the title in the light of the story. How does it imply the problem of appearance and reality as it is present in this story? - Crane's story seems to suggest that true heroism cannot be judged by external appearance. The circumstances which compel Collins to cross under fire to the well and the clumsy panic with which he runs back to his comrades explain away the apparent heroism of his act. The spilled water at the end destroys all meaning for the act. But the mystery lies deeper than this. Demented by fear, Collins runs past the dying artillery officer who asks for a drink. "I can't!" he screams, but a moment later he turns and clumsily gives him a drink. He is still gripped by fear. "Collins tried to hold the bucket steadily, but his shaking hands caused the water to splash all over the face of the dying man." Every detail of the incident exposes the mystery of heroism. The reader is confronted with it realistically and he knows that this is Collins's moment of redemption. The fact that the officer dies makes no difference. Reality lies in the spiritual quality of the act. The title has succinctly stated the paradox, and the story has illuminated it.

7. Why did the men goad Collins into going for the water? Do you think they really expected him to do it? What was their reaction when he went? How did they greet his return? Do you think they regarded him as a hero? - The men of the company were idly passing the time by joshing Collins about his thirst and finding amusement in his defensive reaction to their taunts and jeers. They certainly never expected him to go. "Their astonishment found vent in strange repetitions. 'Are yeh sure a-goin?' they demanded again and again." Upon his return they received him in the same spirit they might welcome a football hero. "The regiment gave him a welcoming roar. The grimed faces were wrinkled in laughter." It was not the kind of welcome they would have given him had his errand been to rescue a wounded comrade. True heroism they would have recognized solemnly. This trivial daring was regarded lightly.

8. Read again the passage beginning on p. 91 where the dying artillery officer asks Collins for a drink of water. Why did he suppress the groans, and calmly ask for a drink? Was this courage? Why do you think the author put the episode into the story at this point? - Even in his death agony the officer was aware of his duty to set an example for the men. Conquering his pain to ask quietly for a drink of water did show courage, the kind that is habitual, and served to heighten by contrast the undignified flight of Collins gripped by fear. It was probably the influence of this quiet courage that compelled Collins to turn back, ashamed of his own lack of control. Outside circumstances once again dominated his action. Is this part of the mystery?

9. In a moment of crisis, details that may be quite irrelevant to what is

happening sometimes make a vivid impression upon us. The seeming unreality of the situation is heightened by an awareness of the actual reality of these things. Crane mentions the white legs of the gunners, for example. What other details can you find used by the author to create the feeling of emergency? How are the impressions often made more vivid by the use of simile and metaphor? Find and comment upon a few that you feel to be most effective. - A heightened awareness of his surroundings is suggested by Collins noting the chimney bricks and the door on one hinge as he approaches the ruined house, and the wheel-ruts and hoofprints as he returns with the water. Through the use of metaphor and simile, the author creates dramatic images that produce a realistic setting. There are many examples the students might quote. A few are listed here for your convenience:

Simile
"A color sergeant fell flat with his flag as if he had slipped on ice."
". . . he made a mad rush for the house which he viewed as a man submerged to the neck in a boiling surf might view the shore."
"Collins ran in the manner of a farmer chased out of a dairy by a bull."
"The officer was as a man gone in drink. His arm bent like a twig. His head drooped as if his neck were of willow."

Metaphor
"He could see nothing but flying arrows, flaming red."
". . . the earthquake explosions drove him insane"
"The sky was full of fiends who directed all their wild rage at his head."
"practical angels of death"

10. Find examples in the story that illustrate how Crane has sometimes used contrast to heighten the effect of the impression he wishes to create. - We have already, in question 8, discussed the contrast between the panic of Collins and the calm courage of the dying artillery officer. Another example the students might mention is the artillery lieutenant whose eyes "sparkled like those of an insane man," galloping at high speed for orders to withdraw. In the next paragraph he is contrasted with the "fat major, standing carelessly with his sword held horizontally behind him and with his legs far apart", laughing at the receding horseman.

Earlier in the story, the paragraph describing the violent and sudden death of the bugler is heightened by constrast with a description, in the next paragraph, of the "fair little meadow which spread at their feet. Its long grass was rippling gently in a breeze."

11. Do you find any irony in the way the story ends? Might the title itself be ironic? Are there other touches of irony in the story? Does the ironic tone give you a clue to the author's Point of View? - The story ends with an anti-climax. That Collins risked his life for nothing will surely strike the students as ironic. Even the water he gave the dying officer was wasted, since he died anyway. And yet, ironically, this act had significance. Herein lies the mystery, exposed yet not explained.

The choice of Collins himself as the hero is ironic. Crane has illuminated the problem of heroism through the actions of a non-hero.

Collins is a nondescript, faceless representative of the masses--a mere nobody who is driven to action through circumstances beyond his control, including the circumstance of his heredity. Crane's own philosophy of life can certainly be detected underneath the surface of the story. His classical view of man as the pawn of fate shows through. Even the brief moment of glory is achieved unconsciously. Hence the irony of the title. Man, in Crane's view, is not the master of his fate.

12. Might the bucket of water be interpreted as a symbol? Could the author be using the incident to point up something about life he feels is significant? Did Crane have a purpose beyond presenting an entertaining story? --Water is often used as a symbol for life. We have no way of knowing whether Crane intended the story to be read symbolically, but it would seem to illustrate what we know to have been the author's views on life. Collins might be regarded as typifing man, the helpless victim of controlling circumstances. But even if we reject such an interpretation, it is fairly safe to say Crane was interested in psychological reactions, and this concern, rather than an entertaining narrative, provided the motive for the story.

13. Compare this statement made by Crane himself with what you understood about O. Henry through "The Double - Dyed Deceiver": "I renounced the clever school in literature. It seemed to me that there must be something worse in life than to sit and cudgel one's brains for the clever and witty expedients."

14. The author allows himself to be omniscient. How does this affect the story?--Crane is able to philosophize on the nature of heroism by telling the reader what Collins' thoughts and motor reactions are during his self-imposed ordeal. It heightens the irony because when we see into Collins' mind we can clearly realize how futile his action really is.

EXERCISES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPOSITION

1. Using your dictionary, find the meaning and derivation for each word underlined in the text of the story: conflagration, demeanor, imprecation, calamity, carnage, gesticulating, retraction, indolent, blanched.
What did you notice about the derivation of every word except the last? What does this tell you about our language? Can you replace these words with simpler, more often used words? Can you explain this?
Find other words that are derived from the same Latin root as carnage. Explain how the modern English meaning was derived from the Latin.

2. Much of the vividness of Crane's writing comes from his use of simile and metaphor to convey an exact image to the mind of the reader. Look again at some of the examples you discussed in class. Try to create similar metaphors and similes to bring to life descriptions of some of the following:

   a) a swimmer, diving into the water and swimming;
   b) a mother duck leading her ducklings to the river;
   c) a sky-diver making a parachute jump;
   d) a train viewed from the air;
   e) a sudden shower of rain;
   f) a child wading through a puddle;
   g) anything else you would like to describe.

3. Write an account of an experience that was frightening for you. Try to describe exactly how you felt both at the time, and afterwards.

4. Is heroism simply the absence of fear in a dangerous situation? Is it possible for a hero to experience fear? Write a definiton of heroism as you understand it, and give examples that illustrate your view.

5. With the help of your teacher or librarian, find another story by Stephen Crane. Read it and then write a report, after you have studied the story in the same way you looked at "A Mystery of Heroism." Be sure to discuss what the story is about both on the surface level (the plot), and on a deeper level. Sometimes this general idea is called the theme. Have the details of the story been selected by the author to point up the theme? How important is the setting? How is it developed? Is it given at the beginning, or scattered throughout the story? Is it needed for the theme? Does it help to explain the characters? Does it create a mood or atmosphere? Is it essential to the plot? Are the characters true to life? What impression does the story leave you with?

   Some of the titles you might enjoy reading are: "The Open Boat," "The Blue Hotel," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "The Gray Sleeve," The Red Badge of Courage (which is sometimes considered a short novel).

   With your teacher's permission, you may prepare this as an oral report to be given to the class.

6. Go to the library and find a historical account of a Civil War battle. Compare this account with Crane's description of the battle in "A Mystery of Heroism." Do the historian and the writer have the same purpose in writing? Does this explain their different Point of View? Write a few paragraphs discussing this question, using illustrations from the two accounts that point up the differences.

"Jupiter Doke, Brigadier General"

by Ambrose Bierce

INTRODUCTION

This story is a small model of the epistolary novel. It consists of crisscrossing of letters, with excerpts from other documents and a disposition thrown in for good measure.

The novel of letters enjoyed its greatest vogue in the eighteenth century when it was used to make fiction more plausible (Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa Harlow, Tobias Smollett's Humphrey Clinker). The technique is used here by Bierce for a certain effect--satire and humor derived from conflicting and sometimes erroneous points of view.

It is important for students to recognize the absurd and improbable military background of Jupiter Doke, his appointment through political channels (based of course on actual Civil War practices), his magnificent use of clichés, his utter ignorance of military matters, his implied cowardice, and the ironic ending in which disaster becomes victory through Jupiter Doke's fear.

It is never clear exactly what purpose is behind Doke's fumbling maneuvers in Northern Kentucky, but they are futile and their results are ironic, thus pointing out certain weaknesses in the military establishment. The student should be encouraged to read carefully to catch the irony. Part of it can be found in the numerous euphemisms that students can be encouraged to discover. Two good examples are: "escutcheon" for honor and "perquisites" for loot and graft.

The student should be encouraged to read between the lines. The following study questions are designed to help him do that.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Re-phrase the first letter from Jupiter Doke to the Secretary of War as a simple, honest statement. What is the effect of such phrases as "In times that try men's souls"?

2. Give a character sketch of General Doke. Doke's actions, as well as his statements, have to be taken into account.

3. Reading between the lines in a story such as this, with its purposely stilted phrasing, is necessary in order to catch much of the humor. Why, for instance, is there only one letter from General Wardorg to General Doke? What does Wardorg's receipt of Doke's letter "through the courtesy of the Confederate department commander under a flag of truce," imply? Does this have any bearing on Wardorg's statement in his next letter to the Secretary of War, "I think him a fool"?--It has become

obvious to Wardorg that Doke is incompetent. The ease with which the enemy can intercept their communications is evidence of the futility of this man.

4. You may or may not find the deaths of so many men humorous (almost all of 25,000 Confederate soldiers), but the author intended it to be so. What saves it from being tragic? Is it possible to be humorous and bitter at the same time? Is there any bitterness here?

5. What is the actual cause of the disaster? Do you see anything beyond simple irony in the commendation and promotion of Jupiter Doke?--(4 & 5) It is obviously fictional. The reader is not brought into close contact with the dead. The situation, triggered by Doke's cowardice, with all those mules stampeding up the road, robs the situation of its normal tone. Bierce, through the accidental success of Doke, is making an ironic comment on the Civil War.

6. How many differences in point of view can you find between the two Civil War stories (this one, and Crane's "A Mystery of Heroism")? Does either writer take sides--that is, is one a Northerner and the other a Southerner?--In the first place, one is humorous; one is not. Crane has a philosophical question about heroism in mind; Bierce is being humorous. But both are ironic, and the result is just about as useful for both. Crane's people, through their dialogue, are obviously Northern; so are Bierce's, but Bierce's sympathy seems to lie with the other side.

7. Do these two writers have different purposes? If so, would you say that these different purposes have something to do with the respective forms of the two stories?--Crane's purpose is to explore heroism through a naturalistic approach. Bierce's is satire and humor. Therefore, the point of view in Crane's story is that of the "hero." For Bierce's, the various movements and cross-purposes can be well delineated through the epistolary form.

"On Saturday Afternoon"

by Alan Sillitoe

INTRODUCTION

A first person narrative can be either subjective or objective. The narrator of "On Saturday Afternoon" is being subjective, that is, he is not analyzing himself. The principal difference between subjectivity and objectivity is the awareness of the teller . In a subjective narrative, therefore, the narrator does not seem to be aware of his point of view, or slant, or prejudice, or whatever one wants to call it. Consequently, he may tell a story somewhat different from the one he wants to tell. In an objective narrative the teller is looking back from the vantage point of time or maturity and tries to tell his story from a more impartial or objective point of view. This is true of Marlow in Conrad's The Heart of Darkness, and the speaker in The Secret Sharer, and Pip in Dickens' Great Expectations. On the other hand, Huck Finn is unaware; Holden Caulfield (in Catcher in the Rye) is unaware; so is the unnamed hero of Sillitoe's story.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What impression does the author give you when he tells you how much he enjoyed seeing "a real bloke stringing himself up?" What kind of person do you expect the narrator to be after the first paragraph?--The first impression is one of shock. You expect the narrator to be juvenile, as in fact he is. He is unaware of the real significance of his story.

2. What does the boy's attitude toward the attempted suicide have to do with his attitude about his parents and his neighborhood?--His attitude reflects his background--his distrust of authority is typical of the English working class. His is essentially the attitude of the "uneducated."

3. Do social and economic conditions have something to do with the boy's attitude? "But outside the air wasn't so fresh, what with that bloody great bike factory bashing away at the yard end." Pick out some remarks like this that may support this idea.--Social and economic conditions usually affect one's attitude. The boy makes a number of interesting remarks: example-- ". . . one of the noisy gossiping women who stood there (by the yard end) every minute of the day except when she trudged to the pawnshop with her husband's bike or best suit."

4. There seems to be an irresistible fascination for the boy to watch the "bloke" hang himself. Why do you suppose that is? Is it really because he is bored and had not been able to go to the Saturday afternoon pictures? --He is more sensitive than he cares to admit. He is trying to hide his feelings behind conventional, hard-boiled words.

5. What does the boy mean when he says, "I wasn't a bit frightened, like I might be now at sixteen, because it was interesting. And being only ten I'd never had a chance to see a bloke hang himself before"? Does this affect the tone?--He has grown up in the last six years and is more aware of the consequences of events.

6. There are three occasions when the boy sucks his thumb. Is there anything especially significant about each separate time, or are they all part of one behavior pattern?--Sucking his thumb seems to be his automatic reaction to events that are charged with suspense and that have emotional climax for him.

7. In a short story nothing can be wasted. What then does the boy really mean when he says, "I slammed his gate so hard with disappointment that it nearly dropped off its hinges"?--Students have to decide whether he really is disappointed that the "bloke" wasn't successful. They can take either point of view successfully.

8. Why is it ironic when the "copper" said, "You'll get five years for this," and the bloke answered back, "That's what yo' think. . . . I only wanted to hang myself."--The irony is that one is punished for failure by society after having been discarded by it.

9. The narrator is telling something about himself as well as about an attempted suicide, although he seems unaware that he is. What do you know about the boy by the time he says, "Trust me. I'll stay alive half barmy till I'm a hundred and five, and then go out screaming blue murder because I want to stay where I am"?--You know that he has learned a lesson, that he understands something new about people, and that he has a new perspective of himself and of his family.

10. Could this story have been presented as well in the third person? What kinds of changes in structure would have had to be made?

"Butcher Bird"

by Wallace Stegner

INTRODUCTION

The author of "Butcher Bird," unlike the author of "On Saturday Afternoon," does not refer to himself or tell how he knows what he knows; even though there cannot be a story without a narrator, he does not identify himself. But the material, its arrangement, and choice of words are his. He does, however, comment occasionally, for such purposes as foreshadowing, but his point of view is essentially that of one character whose vantage point is physical and whose way of perceiving events is personal.

It is often difficult to decide where the author is himself peeping through. In contemporary fiction, the writer usually does not say, "Reader, this is not the way things ought to be done!" He may, as Mr. Stegner does right at the beginning of "Butcher Bird," say, "He found more than he looked for at Garfield's." It is a point that he wants very much to make, and he cannot trust anyone else to make it. However, most of the time he contents himself with letting his character-interpreter filter the evidence for him. Thus, the reader sees the world as the chosen person sees it, but he understands it as the author understands it.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "The hot midsummer afternoon was still and breathless, the air harder to breathe than usual." This sentence seems to set the atmosphere for the story. Is there a connection between the weather and the quarrel between husband and wife?--The weather is heavy and oppressive; it symbolizes the relationship between husband and wife. It foreshadows the quarrel.

2. In the third paragraph the author steps in directly and says, "He found more than he looked for attGarfield's." What function does this bald statement have in the story?--It is a stock foreshadowing device for suspense.

3. When Mr. Garfield is explaining his experiment with trees, the boy's mother "was looking down with all her longings suddenly plain and naked in her eyes." Can you find any significance in this statement?--Her repressed life is reflected in her attitude toward a little greenery. There is little kindness or beauty in her life.

4. Does the weather have anything to do with the father's irritability? Does it in any way excuse his actions? Compare him with Mr. Garfield in this respect.--In all fairness to the father, rain is needed for the crops. He is worried. He has more experience than Garfield, and knows the consequences of a bad year. He is more committed to this hard life.

5. What do you think the boy's position is in the struggle between mother and father? What is the struggle actually about?--The boy is caught in the middle. He doesn't want to take sides. He wants to respect his father. On the other hand, he is horrified when his father shoots the sparrow. It is the sort of awkward position that children are too often put in.

6. Why does the father shoot the sparrow? Is he in some way jealous of Mr. Garfield?--The shooting is revenge. He is jealous of Garfield's kindness and sensitivity, and he feels inadequate because of that.

7. What is significant about the last paragraph? "'Leave it right there,' she said. 'After a while your father will want to hang it on the barbed wire.'"--His mother is referring to the senseless killing of the sparrow which is very much like the killing done by the butcher bird. It is a bitter sort of triumph for her. In one way she is getting her own back.

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SHORT STORIES

Literature Curriculum IV

Student Version

TE000 198

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SHORT STORIES

The Country of the Blind

A Double - Dyed Deceiver

A Mystery of Heroism

Jupiter Doke, Brigadier General

On Saturday Afternoon

Butcher Bird

INTRODUCTION

Any work of literature is a combination of several things, all operating at the same time. Among these things are you, the reader, who respond to a certain work in a certain way; the author, who creates a fictional world and takes you into that world; and the things that the author causes to go on in that fictional world which he creates.

Some of these things cannot very well be investigated in a classroom. You, for instance. You are a variable factor in the complex interaction between author, reader, and work. Your mood, your knowledge, your previous experience, your sensitivity, cannot be dealt with handily; for one thing you are too different from everyone else, and for another such things as mood, sensitivity, and experience do not lend themselves easily to analysis.

But we can do a little better with what the author does and how he does it. We can look at the world the author makes, the things that go on in it and what significance they have, and how the author lets us look into that world. This is essentially what you have been doing in this course for the past three years: looking at the complex interaction of several things operating at the same time. For the sake of simplicity we have grouped these things under three main headings, Subject, Form, and Point of View.

In the past you have usually concentrated on one or another of the headings.

In this group of short stories--a particular literary form with which you should be quite familiar by now--we want you to consider all three things at once. In other words, we want you now to begin to consider the short story as a totality, a combination of Subject, Form, and Point of View interacting with each other.

At the same time, however, we want you to concentrate on the question of point of view--the person who tells the story, and where he is in relation to the events that go on. You will find many different points of view in these stories: the first person narrator, the omniscient narrator, the omniscient narrator who concentrates on one particular character, and a point of view you haven't encountered before--the epistolary form, in which the story is told through letters.

Why is it important to concentrate on this aspect of point of view? We said earlier that an author creates a fictional world and then takes the reader into that world. Well, the only way to get into that world is through what the author chooses to show you, and what he chooses to show you is determined by whom he chooses to have tell the story. Think back for a moment to last year's story, "Haircut." What do you think the story would have been like if it had been told by the doctor in the first person? Quite different indeed. But Lardner chose to let us into his fictional world by means of the innocent narrator, the barber, who didn't see the significance of what he told. This choice of point of view governed not only the form of the story, but also your understanding of what the subject of the story was. The contrast between your understanding and the barber's lack of it was one of the things the story was about.

So, an awareness of point of view, and the way it controls what we see in the author's fictional world, is important to a full understanding of the total effect of a work of literature.

As you read these stories, then, ask yourself two questions. First, how do Subject, Form, and Point of View interact to give a total effect? Second, how does the author's choice of a particular point of view govern the form of the story and control the reader's understanding of the subject?

The Country of the Blind

H. G. Wells

You are about to read a story that is intriguing, unusual, and enjoyable. You will read about a strange land and about strange people. Yet this story, like so many you have studied, has two subjects. It is about Nunez, the South American explorer, and his incredible adventure; but it is about other things as well.

H. G. Wells, the author, is regarded as the originator of modern science fiction, and perhaps you will agree when you have finished this that he had a very lively imagination indeed. But this story is more than a weird story of the unknown. In it Wells makes some scathing comments about society. See if you agree—or disagree --with him.

The Country of the Blind

H. G. Wells

Three hundred miles and more from Chimborazo, one hundred from the snows of Cotopaxi, in the wildest wastes of Ecuador's Andes, there lies that mysterious mountain valley, cut off from the world of men, the Country of the Blind. Long years ago that valley lay so far open to the world that men might come at last through frightful gorges and over an icy pass into its equable meadows; and thither indeed men came, a family or so of Peruvian half-breeds fleeing from the lust and tyranny of an evil Spanish ruler. Then came the stupendous outbreak of Mindobamba, when it was night in Quito for seventeen days, and the water was boiling at Yaguachi and all the fish floating dying even as far as Guayaquil; everywhere along the Pacific slopes there were land-slips and swift thawings and sudden floods, and one whole side of the old Arauca crest slipped and came down in thunder, and cut off the Country of the Blind for ever from the exploring feet of men. But one of these early settlers had chanced to be on the hither side of the gorges when the world had so terribly shaken itself, and he perforce had to forget his wife and his child and all the friends and possessions he had left up there, and start life over again in the lower world. He started it again but ill, blindness overtook him, and he died of punishment in the mines; but the story he told begot a legend that lingers along the length of the Cordilleras of the Andes to this day.

He told of his reason for venturing back from that fastness, into which he had first been carried lashed to a llama, beside a vast bale of gear, when he was a child. The valley, he said, had in it all that the heart of man could desire--sweet water, pasture, and even climate, slopes of rich brown soil with tangles of a shrub that bore an excellent fruit, and on one side great hanging forests of pine that held the avalanches high. Far overhead, on three sides, vast cliffs of grey-green rock were capped by cliffs of ice; but the glacier stream came not to them but flowed away by the farther slopes, and only now and then huge ice masses fell on the valley side. In this valley it neither rained nor snowed, but the abundant springs gave a rich green pasture, that irrigation would spread over all the valley space. The settlers did well indeed there. Their beasts did well and multiplied, and but one thing marred their happiness. Yet it was enough to mar it greatly. A strange disease had come upon them, and had made all the children born to them there--and indeed, several older children also--blind. It was to seek some charm or antidote against this plague of blindness that he had with fatigue and danger and difficulty returned down the gorge. In those days, in such cases, men did not think of germs and infections but of sins; and it seemed to him that the reason of this affliction must lie in the negligence of these priestless immigrants to set up a shrine so soon as they entered the valley. He wanted a shrine--a handsome, cheap, effectual shrine--to be erected in the valley; he wanted relics and such-like potent things of faith, blessed objects and mysterious medals and prayers. In his wallet he had a bar of native silver for which he would not account; he insisted there was none in the valley with something of the insistence of an inexpert liar. They had all clubbed their money and ornaments together, having little need for such treasure up there, he said, to buy them holy help against their ill. I figure this dim-eyed young mountaineer, sunburnt, gaunt, and anxious, hatbrim clutched feverishly, a man all unused to the ways of the lower world, telling this story to some keen-eyed, attentive priest before the great convulsion; I can picture him presently seeking to return with pious and infallible remedies against that trouble, and the infinite dismay with which he must have faced the tumbled vastness where the gorge had once come out. But the rest of his story of mischances is lost to me, save that I know of his evil death after several years. Poor stray from that remoteness! The stream that had once made the gorge now bursts from the mouth of a rocky cave, and the legend his poor, ill-told story set going developed into the legend of a race of blind men somewhere "over there"one may still hear to-day.

And amidst the little population of that now isolated and forgotten valley the disease ran its course. The old became groping and purblind, the young saw but dimly, and the children that were born to them saw never at all. But life was very easy in that snow-rimmed basin, lost to all the world, with neither thorns nor briars, with no evil insects nor any beasts save the gentle breed of llamas they had lugged and thrust and followed up the beds of the shrunken rivers in the gorges up which they had come. The seeing had become purblind so gradually that they scarcely noted their loss. They guided the sightless youngsters hither and thither until they knew the whole valley marvellously, and when at last sight died out among them the race lived on. They had even time to adapt themselves to the blind control of fire, which they made carefully in stoves of stone. They were a simple strain of people at the first, unlettered, only slightly touched with the Spanish civilisation, but with something of a tradition of the arts of old Peru and of its lost philosophy. Generation followed generation. They forgot many things; they devised many things. Their tradition of the greater world they came from became mythical in colour and uncertain. In all things save sight they were strong and able, and presently the chance birth and heredity sent one who had an original mind and who could talk and persuade among them, and then afterwards another. These two passed, leaving their effects, and the little community grew in numbers and in understanding, and met and settled social and economic problems that arose. Generation followed generation. Generation followed generation. There came a time when a child was born who was fifteen generations from that ancestor who went out of the valley with a bar of silver to seek God's aid, and who never returned. Thereabouts it chanced that a man came into this community from the outer world. And this is the story of that man.

He was a mountaineer from the country near Quito, a man who had been down to the sea and had seen the world, a reader of books in an original way, an acute and enterprising man, and he was taken on by a party of Englishmen who had come out to Ecuador to climb mountains, to replace one of their three Swiss guides who had fallen ill. He climbed here and he climbed there, and then came the attempt on Parascotopetl, the Matterhorn of the Andes, in which he was lost to the outer world. The story of the accident has been written a dozen times. Pointer's narrative is the best. He tells how the little party worked their difficult and almost vertical way up to the very foot of the last and greatest precipice, and how they built a night shelter amidst the snow upon a little shelf of rock, and, with a touch of real dramatic power, how presently they found Nunez had gone from them. They shouted, and there was no reply; shouted and whistled, and for the rest of that night they slept no more.

As the morning broke they saw the traces of his fall. It seems impossible he could have uttered a sound. He had slipped eastward towards the unknown side of the mountain; far below he had struck a steep slope of snow, and ploughed his way down it in the midst of a snow avalanche. His track went straight to the edge of a frightful precipice, and beyond that everything was hidden. Far, far below, and hazy with distance, they could see trees rising out of a narrow, shut-in valley--the lost Country of the Blind. But they did not know it was the lost Country of the Blind, nor distinguish it in any way from any other narrow streak of upland valley. Unnerved by this disaster, they abandoned their attempt in the afternoon, and Pointer was called away to the war before he could make another attack. To this day Parascotopetl lifts an unconquered crest, and Pointer's shelter crumbles unvisited amidst the snows.

And the man who fell survived.

At the end of the slope he fell a thousand feet, and came down in the midst of a cloud of snow upon a snow slope even steeper than the one above. Down this he was whirled, stunned and insensible, but without a bone broken in his body; and then at last came to gentler slopes, and at last rolled out and lay still, buried amidst a softening heap of the white masses that had accompanied and saved him. He came to himself with a dim fancy that he was ill in bed; then realised his position with a mountaineer's intelligence, and worked himself loose and, after a rest or so, out until he saw the stars. He rested flat upon his chest for a space, wondering where he was and what had happened to him. He explored his limbs, and discovered that several of his buttons were gone and his coat turned over his head. His knife had gone from his pocket and his hat was lost, though he had tied it under his chin. He recalled that he had been looking for loose stones to raise his piece of the shelter wall. His ice-axe had disappeared.

He decided he must have fallen, and looked up to see, exaggerated by the ghastly light of the rising moon, the tremendous flight he had taken. For a while he lay, gazing blankly at that pale cliff towering above, rising moment by moment out of a subsiding tide of darkness. Its phantasmal, mysterious beauty held him for a space, and then he was seized with a paroxysm of sobbing laughter....

After a great interval of time he became aware that he was near the lower edge of the snow. Below, down what was now a moonlit and practicable slope, he saw the dark and broken appearance of rock-strewn turf. He struggled to his feet, aching in every joint and limb, got down painfully from the heaped loose snow about him, went downward until he was on the turf, and there dropped rather than lay beside a boulder, drank deep from the flask in his inner pocket, and instantly fell asleep....

He was awakened by the singing of birds in the trees far below.

He sat up and perceived he was on a little alp at the foot of a vast precipice, that was grooved by the gully down which he and his snow had come. Over against him another wall of rock reared itself against the sky. The gorge between these precipices ran east and west and was full of the morning sunlight, which lit to the westward the mass of fallen mountain that closed the descending gorge. Below him it seemed there was a precipice equally steep, but behind the snow in the gully he found a sort of chimney-cleft dripping with snow-water down which a desperate man might venture. He found it easier than it seemed, and came at last to another desolate alp, and then after a rock climb of no particular difficulty to a steep slope of trees. He took his bearings and turned his face up the gorge, for he saw it opened out above upon green meadows, among which he now glimpsed quite distinctly a cluster of stone huts of unfamiliar fashion. At times his progress was like clambering along the face of a wall, and after a time the rising sun ceased to strike along the gorge, the voices of the singing birds died away, and the air grew cold and dark about him. But the distant valley with its houses was all the brighter for that. He came presently to talus, and among the rocks he noted—for he was an observant man--an unfamiliar fern that seemed to clutch out of the crevices with intense green hands. He picked a frond or so and gnawed its stalk and found it helpful.

About midday he came at last out of the throat of the gorge into the plain and the sunlight. He was stiff and weary; he sat down in the shadow of a rock, filled up his flask with water from a spring and drank it down, and remained for a time resting before he went on to the houses.

They were very strange to his eyes, and indeed the whole aspect of that valley became, as he regarded it, queerer and more unfamiliar. The greater part of its surface was lush green meadow, starred with many beautiful flowers, irrigated with extraordinary care, and bearing evidence of systematic cropping piece by piece. High up and ringing the valley about was a wall, and what appeared to be a circumferential water-channel, from which little trickles of water that fed the meadow plants came, and on the higher slopes above this flocks of llamas cropped the scanty herbage. Sheds, apparently shelters or feeding-places for the llamas, stood against the boundary wall here and there. The irrigation streams ran together into a main channel down the centre of the valley, and this was enclosed on either side by a wall breast high. This gave a singularly urban quality to this secluded place, a quality that was greatly enhanced by the fact that a number of paths paved with black and white stones, and each with a curious little kerb at the side, ran hither and thither in an orderly manner. The houses of the central village were quite unlike the casual and higgledy-piggledy agglomeration of the mountain villages he knew; they stood in a continuous row on either side of a central street of astonishing cleanness; here and there their parti-coloured façade was pierced by a door, and not a solitary window broke their even frontage. They were parti-coloured with extraordinary irregularity, smeared with a sort of plaster that was sometimes grey, sometimes drab, sometimes slate-coloured or dark brown; and it was the sight of this wild plastering first brought the word "blind" into the thoughts of the explorer. "The good man who did that," he thought, "must have been as blind as a bat."

He descended a steep place, and so came to the wall and channel that ran about the valley, near where the latter spouted out its surplus contents into the deeps of the gorge in a thin and wavering thread of cascade. He could now see a number of men and women resting on piled heaps of grass, as if taking a siesta, in the remoter part of the meadow, and nearer the village a number of recumbent children, and then nearer at hand three men carrying pails on yokes along a little path that ran from the encircling wall towards the houses. These latter were clad in garments of llama cloth and boots and belts of leather, and they wore caps of cloth with back and ear flaps. They followed one another in single file, walking slowly and yawning as they walked, like men who have been up all night. There was something so reassuringly prosperous and respectable in their bearing that after a moment's hesitation Nunez stood forward as conspicuously as possible upon his rock, and gave vent to a mighty shout that echoed round the valley.

The three men stopped, and moved their heads as though they were looking about them. They turned their faces this way and that, and Nunez gesticulated with freedom. But they did not appear to see him for all his gestures, and after a time, directing themselves towards the mountains far away to the right, they shouted as if in answer. Nunez bawled again, and then once more, and as he gestured ineffectually the word "blind" came up to the top of his thoughts. "The fools must be blind," he said.

When at last, after much shouting and wrath, Nunez crossed the stream by a little bridge, came through a gate in the wall, and approachedthem, he was sure that they were blind. He was sure that this was the Counry of the Blind of which the legends told. Conviction had sprung upon him, and a sense of great and rather enviable adventure. The three stood side by side, not looking at him, but with their ears directed towards him, judging him by his unfamiliar steps. They stood close together like men a little afraid, and he could see their eyelids closed and sunken, as though the very ballsbeneath had shrunk away. There was an expression near awe on their face.

"A man," one said, in hardly recognisable Spanish--"a man itis--a man or spirit--coming down from the rocks."

But Nunez advanced with the confident steps of a youth who entrs upon life. All the old stories of the lost valley and the Country of the Blind had come back to his mind, and through his thoughts ran this old proverb, asif it were a refrain---

"In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King."

"In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King."

And very civilly he gave them greeting. He talked to them and used his eyes.

"Where does he come from, brother Pedro?" asked one.

"Down out of the rocks."

"Over the mountains I come," said Nunez, "out of the country beyond there--where men can see. From near Bogota, where there are a hundred thousands of people, and where the city passes out of sight."

"Sight?" muttered Pedro. "Sight?"

"He comes," said the second blind man, "out of the rocks."

The cloth of their coats Nunez saw was curiously fashioned, each with a different sort of stitching.

They startled him by a simultaneous movement towards him, each with a hand outstretched. He stepped back from the advance of these spread fingers.

"Come hither," said the third blind man, following his motion and clutching him neatly.

And they held Nunez and felt him over, saying no word further until they had done so.

"Carefull," he cried, with a finger in his eye, and found they thought that organ, with its fluttering lids, a queer thing in him. They went over it again.

"A strange creature, Correa," said the one called Pedro. "Feel the coarseness of his hair. Like a llama's hair."

"Rough he is as the rocks that begot him," said Correa, investigating Nunez's unshaven chin with a soft and slightly moist hand. "Perhaps he will grow finer." Nunez struggled a little under their examination, but they gripped him firm.

"Carefully," he said again.

"He speaks," said the third man. "certainly he is a man."

"Ugh!" said Pedro, at the roughness of his coat.

"And you have come into the world?" asked Pedro.

"Out of the world. Over mountains and glaciers; right over above there, half-way to the sun. Out of the great big world that goes down, twelve days' journey to the sea."

They scarcely seemed to heed him. "Our fathers have told us men may be made by the forces of Nature," said Correa. "It is the warmth of things and moisture, and rottenness--rottenness."

"Let us lead him to the elders," said Pedro.

"Shout first," said Correa, "lest the children be afraid. This is a marvellous occasion."

So they shouted, and Pedro went first and took Nunez by the hand to lead him to the houses.

He drew his hand away. "I can see," he said.

"See?" said Correa.

"Yes, see," said Nunez, turning towards him, and stumbled against Pedro's pail.

"His senses are still imperfect," said the third blind man. "He stumbles, and talks unmeaning words. Lead him by the hand."

"As you will," said Nunez, and was led along, laughing.

It seemed they knew nothing of sight.

Well, all in good time he would teach them.

He heard people shouting, and saw a number of figures gathering together in the middle roadway of the village.

He found it tax his nerve and patience more than he had anticipated, that first encounter with the population of the Country of the Blind. The place seemed larger as he drew near to it, and the smeared plasterings queerer, and a crowd of children and men and women (the women and girls, he was pleased to note, had some of them quite sweet faces, for all their eyes were shut and sunken) came about him, holding on to him, touching him with soft, sensitive hands, smelling at him, and listening at every word he spoke. Some of the maidens and children, however, kept aloof as if afraid, and indeed his voice seemed coarse and rude beside their softer notes. They mobbed him. His three guides kept close to him with an effect of proprietorship, and said again and again, "A wild man out of the rocks."

"Bogota," he said. "Bogota. Over the mountain crests."

"A wild man--using wild words," said Pedro. "Did you hear that--Bogota? His mind is hardly formed yet. He has only the beginnings of speech."

A little boy nipped his hand. "Bogota!" he said mockingly.

"Ay! A city to your village. I come from the great world--where men have eyes and see."

"His name's Bogota," they said.

"He stumbled," said Correa, "stumbled twice as we came hither."

"Bring him to the elders."

And they thrust him suddenly through a doorway into a room as black as pitch, save at the end there faintly glowed a fire. The crowd closed in behind him and shut out all but the faintest glimmer of day, and before he could arrest himself he had fallen headlong over the feet of a seated man. His arm, outflung struck the face of someone else as he went down; he felt the soft impact of features and heard a cry of anger, and for a moment he struggled against a number of hands that clutched him. It was a one-sided fight. An inkling of the situation came to him, and he lay quiet.

"I fell down," he said; "I couldn't see in this pitchy darkness."

There was a pause as if the unseen persons about him tried to understand his words. Then the voice of Correa said: "He is but newly formed. He stumbles as he walks and mingles words that mean nothing with his speech."

Others also said things about him that he heard or understood imperfectly.

"May I sit up?" he asked, in a pause. "I will not struggle against you again."

They consulted and let him rise.

The voice of an older man began to question him, and Nunez found himself trying to explain the great world out of which he had fallen, and the sky and mountains and sight and such-like marvels, to these elders who sat in darkness in the Country of the Blind. And they would believe and understand nothing whatever he told them, a thing quite outside his expectation. They would not even understand many of his words. For fourteen generations these people had been blind and cut off from all the seeing world; the names for all the things of sight had faded and changed; the story of the outer world was faded and changed to a child's story; and they had ceased to concern themselves with anything beyond the rocky slopes above their circling wall. Blind men of genius had arisen among them and questioned the shreds of belief and tradition they had brought with them from their seeing days, and had dismissed all these things as idle fancies, and replaced them with new and saner explanations. Much of their imagination had shrivelled with their eyes, and they had made for themselves new imaginations with their ever more sensitive ears and finger-tips. Slowly Nunez realised this; that his expectation of wonder and reverence at his origin and his gifts was not to be borne out; and after his poor attempt to explain sight to them had been set aside as the confused version of a new-made being describing the marvels of his incoherent sensations, he subsided, a little dashed, into listening to their instruction. And the eldest of the blind men explained to him life and philosophy and religion, how that the world (meaning their valley) had been first an empty hollow in the rocks, and then had come, first, inanimate things without the gift of touch, and llamas and a few other creatures that had little sense, and then men, and at last angels, whom one could hear singing and making fluttering sounds, but whom no one could touch at all, which puzzled Nunez greatly until he thought of the birds.

He went on to tell Nunez how this time had been divided into the warm and the cold, which are the blind equivalents of day and night, and how it was good to sleep in the warm and work during the cold, so that now, but for his advent, the whole town of the blind would have been asleep. He said Nunez must have been specially created to learn and serve the wisdom they had acquired, and that for all his mental incoherency and stumbling behavior he must have courage and do his best to learn, and at that all the people in the doorway murmured encouragingly. He said the night--for the blind call their day night--was now far gone, and it behoved every one to go back to sleep. He asked Nunez if he knew how to sleep, and Nunez said he did, but that before sleep he wanted food.

They brought him food--llama's milk in a bowl, and brought salted bread--and led him into a lonely place to eat out of their hearing, and afterwards to slumber until the chill of the mountain evening roused them to begin their day again. But Nunez slumbered not at all.

Instead, he sat up in the place where they had left him, resting his limbs and turning the unanticipated circumstances of his arrival over and over in his mind.

Every now and then he laughed, sometimes with amusement, and sometimes with indignation.

"Unformed mind!" he said. "Got no senses yet! They little know they've been insulting their heaven-sent king and master. I see I must bring them to reason. Let me think--let me think."

He was still thinking when the sun set.

Nunez had an eye for all beautiful things, and it seemed to him that the glow upon the snowfields and glaciers that rose about the valley on every side was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. His eyes went from that inaccessible glory to the village and irrigated fields, fast sinking into the twilight, and suddenly a wave of emotion took him, and he thanked God from the bottom of his heart that the power of sight had been given him.

He heard a voice calling to him from out of the village. "Ya ho there, Bogota! Come hither!"

At that he stood up smiling. He would show these people once and for all what sight would do for a man. They would seek him, but not find him.

"You move no, Bogota," said the voice.

He laughed noiselessly, and made two stealthy steps aside from the path.

"Trample not on the grass, Bogota; that is not allowed."

Nunez had scarcely heard the sound he made himself. He stopped amazed.

The owner of the voice came running up the piebald path towards him.

He stepped back into the pathway. "Here I am," he said.

"Why did you not come when I called you?" said the blind man. "Must you be led like a child? Cannot you hear the path as you walk?"

Nunez laughed. I can see it," he said.

"There is no such word as see," said the blind man, after a pause. "Cease this folly, and follow the sound of my feet."

Nunez followed, a little annoyed.

"My time will come," he said.

"You'll learn," the blind man answered. "There is much to learn in the world."

"Has no one told you, 'In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King'?"

"What is blind?" asked the blind man carelessly over his shoulder.

Four days passed, and the fifth found the King of the Blind still incognito, as a clumsy and useless stranger among his subjects.

It was, he found, much more difficult to proclaim himself than he had supposed, and in the meantime, while he meditated his coup d'état, he did what he was told and learnt the manners and customs of the Country of the Blind. He found working and going about at night a particularly irksome thing, and he decided that that should be the first thing he would change.

They led a simple, laborious life, these people, with all the elements of virtue and happiness, as these things can be understood by men. They toiled, but not oppressively; they had food and clothing sufficient for their needs; they had days and seasons of rest; they made much of music and singing, and there was love among them, and little children.

It was marvellous with what confidence and precision they went about their ordered world. Everything, you see, had been made to fit their needs; each of the radiating paths of the valley area had a constant angle to the others, and was distinguished by a special notch upon its kerbing; all obstacles and irregularities of path or meadow had long since been cleared away; all their methods and procedure arose naturally from their special needs. Their senses had become marvellously acute; they could hear and judge the slightest gesture of a man a dozen paces away--could hear the very beating of his heart. Intonation had long replaced expression with them, and touches gesture, and their work with hoe and spade and fork was as free and confident as garden work can be. Their sense of smell was extraordinarily fine; they could distinguish individual differences as readily as a dog can, and they went about the tending of the llamas, who lived among the rocks above and came to the wall for food and shelter, with ease and confidence. It was only when at last Nunez sought to assert himself that he found how easy and confident their movements could be.

He rebelled only after he had tried persuasion.

He tried at first on several occasions to tell them of sight. "Look you here, you people," he said. "There are things you do not understand in me."

Once or twice one or two of them attended to him; they sat with faces downcast and ears turned intelligently towards him, and he did his best to tell them what it was to see. Among his hearers was a girl, with eyelids less red and sunken than the others, so that one could almost fancy she was hiding eyes, whom especially he hoped to persuade. He spoke of the beauties of sight, of watching the mountains, of the sky and the sunrise, and they heard him with amused incredulity that presently became condemnatory. They told him there were indeed no mountains at all, but that the end of the rocks where the llamas grazed was indeed the end of the world; thence sprang a cavernous roof of the universe, from which the dew and the avalances fell; and when he maintained stoutly the world had neither end nor roof such as they supposed, they said his thoughts were wicked. So far as he could describe sky and clouds and stars to them it seemed to them a hideous void, a terrible blankness in the place of the smooth roof to things in which they believed--it was an article of faith with them that the cavern roof was exquisitely smooth to the touch. He saw that in some manner he shocked them, and gave up that aspect of the matter altogether, and tried to show them the practical value of sight. One morning he saw Pedro in the path called Seventeen and coming towards the central houses, but still too far off for hearing or scent, and he told them as much. "In a little while," he prophesied, "Pedro will be here." An old man remarked that Pedro had no business on path Seventeen, and then, as if in confirmation, that individual as he drew near turned and went transversely into path Ten, and so back with nimble paces towards the outer wall. They mocked Nunez when Pedro did not arrive, and afterwards, when he asked Pedro questions to clear his character, Pedro denied and outfaced him, and was afterwards hostile to him.

Then he induced them to let him go a long way up the sloping meadows towards the wall with one complacent individual, and to him he promised to describe all that happened among the houses. He noted certain goings and comings, but the things that really seemed to signify to these people happened inside of or behind the windowless houses--and of these he could see or tell nothing; and it was after the failure of this attempt, and the ridicule they could not repress, that he resorted to force. He thought of seizing a spade and suddenly smiting one or two of them to earth, and so in fair combat showing the advantage of eyes. He went so far with that resolution as to seize his spade, and then he discovered a new thing about himself, and that was that it was impossible for him to hit a blind man in cold blood.

He hesitated, and found them all aware that he had snatched up the spade. They stood alert, with their heads on one side, and bent ears towards him for what he would do next.

"Put that spade down," said one, and he felt a sort of helpless horror. He came near obedience.

Then he thrust one backwards against a house wall, and fled past him and out of the village.

He went athwart one of their meadows, leaving a track of trampled grass behind his feet, and presently sat down by the side of one of their ways. He felt something of the buoyancy that comes to all men in the beginning of a fight, but more perplexity. He began to realise that you cannot even fight happily with creatures who stand upon a different mental basis to yourself. Far away he saw a number of men carrying spades and sticks come out of the street of houses, and advance in a spreading line along the several paths towards him. They advanced slowly, speaking frequently to one another, and ever and again the whole cordon would halt and sniff the air and listen.

The first time they did this Nunez laughed. But afterwards he did not laugh.

One struck his trail in the meadow grass, and came stooping and feeling his way along it.

For five minutes he watched the slow extension of the cordon, and then his vague dispositon to do something forthwith became frantic. He stood up, went a pace or so towards the circumferential wall, turned, and went back a little way. There they all stood in a crescent, still and listening.

He also stood still, gripping his spade very tightly in both hands. Should he charge them?

The pulse in his ears ran into the rhythm of "In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King!"

Should he charge them?

"Bogota!" called one. "Bogota! where are you?"

He gripped his spade still tighter, and advanced down the meadows towards the place of habitations, and directly he moved they converged upon him. "I'll hit them if they touch me," he swore; "by Heaven, I will. I'll hit." He called aloud, "Look here, I'm going to do what I like in this valley. Do you hear? I'm going to do what I like and go where I like!"

They were moving in upon him quickly, groping, yet moving rapidly. It was like playing blind man's buff, with everyone blindfolded except one. "Get hold of him!" cried one. He found himself in the arc of a loose curve of pursuers. He felt suddenly he must be active and resolute.

"You don't understand," he cried in a voice that was meant to be great and resolute, and which broke. "You are blind, and I can see. Leave me alone!"

"Bogota! Put down that spade, and come off the grass!"

The last order, grotesque in its urban familiarity, produced a gust of anger.

"I'll hurt you," he said, sobbing with emotion. "By Heaven, I'll hurt you. Leave me alone!"

He began to run, not knowing clearly where to run. He ran from the nearest blind man, because it was a horror to hit him. He stopped, and then made a dash to escape from their closing ranks. He made for where a gap was wide, and the men on either side, with a quick perception of the approach of his paces, rushed in on one another. He sprang forward, and then saw he must be caught, and swish! the spade had struck. He felt the soft thud of hand and arm, and the man was down with a yell of pain, and he was through.

Through! And then he was close to the street of houses again, and blind men, whirling spades and stakes, were running with a sort of reasoned swiftness hither and thither.

He heard steps behind him just in time, and found a tall man rushing forward and swiping at the sound of him. He lost his nerve, hurled his spade a yard wide at his antagonist, and whirled about and fled, fairly yelling as he dodged another.

He was panic-stricken. He ran furiously to and fro, dodging when there was no need to dodge, and in his anxiety to see on every side of him at once, stumbling. For a moment he was down and they heard his fall. Far away in the circumferential wall a little doorway looked like heaven, and he set off in a wild rush for it. He did not even look round at his pursuers until it was gained, and he had stumbled across the bridge, clambered a little way among the rocks, to the surprise and dismay of a young llama, who went leaping out of sight, and lay down sobbing for breath.

And so his *coup d'état* came to an end.

He stayed outside the wall of the valley of the Blind for two nights and days without food or shelter, and meditated upon the unexpected. During these meditations he repeated very frequently and always with a profounder note of derision the exploded proverb: "In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King." He thought chiefly of ways of fighting and conquering these people, and it grew clear that for him no practicable way was possible. He had no weapons, and now it would be hard to get one.

The canker of civilisation had got to him even in Bogota, and he could not find it in himself to go down and assassinate a blind man. Of course, if he did that, he might then dictate terms on the threat of assassinating them all. But--sooner or later he must sleep!rrr.

He tried also to find food among the pine trees, to be comfortable under pine boughs while the frost fell at night, and--with less confidence--to catch a llama by artifice in order to try to kill it--perhaps by hammering it with a stone--and so finally, perhaps, to eat some of it. But the llamas had a doubt of him and regarded him with distrustful brown eyes, and spat when he drew near. Fear came on him the second day and fits of shivering. Finally he crawled down to the wall of the Country of the Blind and tried to make terms. He crawled along by the stream, shouting, until two blind men came out to the gate and talked to him.

"I was mad," he said. "But I was only newly made."

They said that was better.

He told them he was wiser now, and repented of all he had done.

Then he wept without intention, for he was very weak and ill now, and they took that as a favourable sign.

They asked him if he still thought he could "*see*".

"No," he said. "That was folly. The word means nothing--less than nothing!"

They asked him what was overhead.

"About ten times ten the height of a man there is a roof above the world--of rock--and very, very smooth.". . . . He burst again into hysterical tears. "Before you ask me any more, give me some food or I shall die."

He expected dire punishments, but these blind people were capable of toleration. They regarded his rebellion as but one more proof of his general idiocy and inferiority; and after they had whipped him they appointed him to do the simplest and heaviest work they had for anyone to do, and he, seeing no other way of living, did submissively what he was told.

He was ill for some days, and they nursed him kindly. That refined his submission. But they insisted on his lying in the dark, and that was a great misery. And blind philosophers came and talked to him of the wicked levity of his mind, and reproved him so impressively for his doubts about the lid of rock that covered the cosmic casserole that he almost doubted whether indeed he was not the victim of hallucination in not seeing it overhead.

So Nunez became a citizen of the Country of the Blind, and these people ceased to be a generalised people and became individualities and familiar to him, while the world beyond the mountains became more and more remote and unreal. There was Yacob, his master, a kindly man when not annoyed; there was Pedro, Yacob's nephew; and there was Medina-saroté, who was the youngest daughter of Yacob. She was little esteemed in the world of the blind, because she had a clear-cut face, and lacked that satisfying, glossy smoothness that is the blind man's ideal of feminine beauty; but Nunez thought her beautiful at first, and presently the most beautiful thing in the whole creation. Her closed eyelids were not sunken and red after the common way of the valley, but lay as though they might open again at any moment; and she had long eyelashes, which were considered a grave disfigurement. And her voice was strong and did not satisfy the acute hearing of the valley swains. So that she had no lover.

There came a time when Nunez thought that, could he win her, he would be resigned to live in the valley for all the rest of his days.

He watched her; he sought opportunities of doing her little services, and presently found that she observed him. Once at a rest-day gathering they sat side by side in the dim starlight, and the music was sweet. His hand came upon hers and he dared to clasp it. Then very tenderly she returned his pressure. And one day, as they were at their meal in the darkness, he felt her hand very softly seeking him, and as it chanced the fire leapt then and he saw the tenderness of her face.

He sought to speak to her.

He went to her one day when shewas sitting in the summer moonlight spinning. The light made her a thing of silver and mystery. He sat down at her feet and told her he loved her, and told her how beautiful she seemed to him. He had a lover's voice, he spoke with a tender reverence that came near to awe, and she had never before been touched by adoration. She made him no definite answer, but it was clear his words pleased her.

After that he talked to her whenever he could take an opportunity. The valley became the world for him, and the world beyond the mountains where men lived in sunlight seemed no more than a fairy tale he would some day pour into her ears. Very tentatively and timidly he spoke to her of sight.

Sight seemed to her the most poetical of fancies, and she listened to his description of the stars and the mountains and her own sweet white-lit beauty as though it was a guilty indulgence. She did not believe, she could only half understand, but she was mysteriously delighted, and it seemed to him that she completely understood.

His love lost its awe and took courage. Presently he was for demanding her of Yacob and the elders in marriage, but she became fearful and delayed. And it was one of her elder sisters who first told Yacob that Medina-saroté and Nunez were in love.

There was from the first very great opposition to the marriage of Nunez and Medina-saroté; not so much because they valued her as because they held him as a being apart, an idiot, incompetent thing below the permissible level of man. Her sisters opposed it bitterly as bringing discredit on them all; and old Yacob, though he had formed a sort of liking for his clumsy, obedient serf, shook his head and said the thing could not be. The young men were all angry at the idea of corrupting the race, and one went so far as to revile and strike Nunez. He struck back. Then for the first time he found an advantage in seeing, even by twilight, and after that fight was over no one was disposed to raise a hand against him. But they still found his marriage impossible.

Old Yacob had a tenderness for his last little daughter, and was grieved to have her weep upon his shoulder.

"You see, my dear, he's an idiot. He has delusions; he can't do anything right."

"I know," wept Medina-saroté. "But he's better than he was. He's getting better. And he's strong, dear father, and kind--stronger and kinder than any other man in the world. And he loves me--and, father, I love him."

Old Yacob was greatly distressed to find her inconsolable, and, besides--what made it more distressing--he liked Nunez for many things. So he went and sat in the windowless council-chamber with the other elders and watched the trend of the talk, and said, at the proper time, "He's better than he was. Very likely, some day, we shall find him as sane as ourselves."

Then afterwards one of the elders, who thought deeply, had an idea. He was the great doctor among these people, their medicine-man, and he had a very philosophical and inventive mind, and the idea of curing Nunez of his peculiarities appealed to him. One day when Yacob was present he returned to the topic of Nunez.

"I have examined Bogota," he said, "and the case is clearer to me. I think very probably he might be cured."

"That is what I have always hoped," said old Yacob.

"His brain is affected," said the blind doctor.

The elders murmured assent.

"Now, what affects it?

"Ah!" said old Yacob.

"This," said the doctor, answering his own question. "Those queer things that are called eyes, and which exist to make an agreeable soft depression in the face, are diseased, in the case of Bogota, in such a way as to affect his brain. They are greatly distended, he has eyelashes, and his eyelids move, and consequently his brain is in a state of constant irritation and distraction."

"Yes?" said old Yacob. "Yes?"

"And I think I may say with reasonable certainty that, in order to cure him completely, all that we need do is a simple and easy surgical operation--namely, to remove these irritant bodies."

"And then he will be sane?"

"Then he will be perfectly sane, and a quite admirable citizen."

?Thank Heaven for science!" said old Yacob, and went forth at once to tell Nunez of his happy hopes.

But Nunez's manner of receiving the good news struck him as being cold and disappointing.

"One might think," he said, "from the tone you take, that you did not care for my daughter."

It was Medina-saroté who persuaded Nunez to face the blind surgeons.

"You do not want me,"he said, "to lose my gift of sight?"

She shook her head.

"My world is sight."

Her head drooped lower.

"There are the beautiful things, the beautiful little things--the flowers, the lichens among the rocks, the lightness and softness on a piece of fur, the far sky with its drifting down of clouds, the sunsets and the stars. And there is you. For you alone it is good to have sight, to see your sweet, serene face, your kindly lips, your dear, beautiful hands folded together....It is these eyes of mine you won, these eyes that hold me to you, that these idiots seek. Instead, I must touch you, hear you, and never see you again. I must come under that roof of rock and stone and darkness, that horrible roof under which your imagination stoops....No; you would not have me do that?"

A disagreeable doubt had arisen in him. He stopped, and left the thing a question.

"I wish," she said, "sometimes----" She paused.

"Yes," said he, a little apprehensively.

"I wish sometimes--you would not talk like that."

"Like what?"

"I know it's pretty--it's your imagination. I love it, but now---"

He felt cold. "Now?" he said faintly.

She sat quite still.

"You mean--you think--I should be better, better perhaps----"

He was realising things very swiftly. He felt anger, indeed anger at the dull course of fate, but also sympathy for her lack of understanding--a sympathy near akin to pity.

"Dear," he said, and he could see by her whiteness how intensely her spirit pressed against the things she could not say. He put his arms about her, he kissed her ear, and they sat for a time in silence.

"If I were to consent to this?" he said at last, in a voice that was very gentle.

She flung her arms about him, weeping wildly. "Oh, if you would," she sobbed, "if only you would!"

For a week before the operation that was to raise him from his servitude and inferiority to the level of a blind citizen, Nunez knew nothing of sleep, and all through the warm sunlit hours, while the others slumbered happily, he sat brooding or wandered aimlessly, trying to bring his mind to bear on his dilemma. He had given his answer, he had given his consent, and still he was not sure. And at last work-time was over, the sun rose in splendour over the golden crests, and his last day of vision began for him. He had a few minutes with Medina-saroté before she went apart to sleep.

"To-morrow," he said, "I shall see no more."

"Dear heart!" she answered, and pressed his hands with all her strength.

"They will hurt you but little," she said; "and you are going through this pain--you are going through it, dear lover, for *me*... Dear, if a woman's heart and life can do it, I will repay you. My dearest one, my dearest with the tender voice, I will repay."

He was drenched in pity for himself and her.

He held her in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers, and looked on her sweet face for the last time. "Good-bye!" he whispered at that dear sight, "good-bye!"

And then in silence he turned away from her.

She could hear his slow retreating footsteps, and something in the rhythm of them threw her into a passion of weeping.

He had fully meant to go to a lonely place where the meadows were beautiful with white narcissus, and there remain until the hour of his sacrifice should come, but as he went he lifted up his eyes and saw the morning, the morning like an angel in golden armour, marching down the steeps. . . .

It seemed to him that before this splendour he, and this blind world in the valley, and his love, and all, were no more than a pit of sin.

He did not turn aside as he had meant to do, but went on, and passed through the wall of the circumference and out upon the rocks, and his eyes were always upon the sunlit ice and snow.

He saw their infinite beauty, and his imagination soared over them to the things beyond he was now to resign for ever.

He thought of that great free world he was parted from, the world that was his own, and he had a vision of those further slopes, distance beyond distance, with Bogota, a place of multitudinous stirring beauty, a glory by day, a luminous mystery by night, a place of palaces and fountains and statues and white houses, lying beautifully in the middle distance. He thought how for a day or so one might come down through passes, drawing ever nearer and nearer to its busy streets and ways. He thought of the river journey, day by day from great Bogota to the still vaster world beyond, through towns and villages, forest and desert places, the rushing river day by day, until its banks receded and the big steamers came splashing by, and one had reached the sea--the limitless sea, with its thousand islands, its thousands of islands, and its ships seen dimly far away in their incessant journeyings round and about that greater world. And there, unpent by mountains, one saw the sky--the sky, not such a disc as one saw it here, but an arch of immeasurable blue, a deep of deeps in which the circling stars were floating....

His eyes scrutinised the great curtain of the mountains with a keener inquiry.

For example, if one went so, up that gully and to the chimney there, then one might come out high among those stunted pines that ran round in a sort of shelf and rose still higher and higher as it passed above the gorge. And then? That talus might be managed. Thence perhaps a climb might be found to take him up to the precipice that came below the snow; and if that chimney failed, then another farther to the east might serve his purpose better. And then? Then one would be out upon the amber-lit snow there, and half-way up to the crest of those beautiful desolations.

He glanced back at the village, then turned right round and regarded it steadfastly.

He though of Medina-saroté, and she had become small and remote.

He turned again towards the mountain wall, down which the day had come to him.

Then very circumspectly he began to climb.

When sunset came he was no longer climbing, but he was far and high. He had been higher, but he was still very high. His clothes were torn, his limbs were blood-stained, he was bruised in many places, but he lay as if he were at his ease, and there was a smile on his face.

From where he rested the valley seemed as if it were in a pit and nearly a mile below. Already it was dim with haze and shadow, though the mountain summits around him were things of light and fire. The mountain summits around him were things of light and fire, and the little details of the rocks near at hand were drenched with subtle beauty--a vein of green mineral piercing the grey, the flash of crystal faces here and there, a minute, minutely-beautiful orange lichen close beside his face. There were deep mysterious shadows in the gorge, blue deepening into purple, and purple into a luminous darkness, and overhead was the illimitable vastness of the sky. But he heeded these things no longer, but lay quite inactive there, smiling as if he were satisfied merely to have escaped from the valley of the Blind in which he had thought to be King.

The glow of the sunset passed, and the night came, and still he lay peacefull contented under the cold clear stars.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can you explain the significance of the first three paragraphs? Just what information do they include? Is it necessary? In what way does it prepare us for what is to follow?

2. The fourth paragraph contains the "beginning" of the action. What are we told here about the hero? How much more do we know about him when the story closes?

3. Why is there a shift in point of view after the third paragraph?

4. Is the accident that precipitates the story credible? In what way?

5. Find the description of the valley. In what way did the valley seem strange to Nunez?

6. Why do you think Wells inserted the old proverb about the one-eyed man? Does this tale prove it to be true or false? Explain.

7. How did the blind people regard Nunez? Is it fair to say that neither understood the other? Explain.

8. Read the sentences beginning "Blind men of genius. . ." and concluding with ". . . New and saner explanations." Is this irony? Explain. Find other examples of irony.

9. Why did Nunez have such difficulty explaining sight to these people? Can you think of any way that would have been more effective?

10. First Nunez tried persuasion. Then he used force. How did the latter method succeed?

11. When did Nunez's smugness give way to despair?

12. Why did Nunez return after his first effort to escape?

13. What was demanded of him? Why were these demands made?

14. Why did Yacob and the others dislike the idea of Nunez marrying Medina sarote?

15. What did the doctor conclude caused Nunez to be different?

16. The doctor said that Nunez would be an admirable citizen and "sane" once his eyes were removed. What irony do you see here?

17. Do you think that Wells feels a good citizen should conform to everything about him and be agreeable? How do you know what the author thinks?

18. Read the four one-sentence paragraphs near the end of the story. What purpose do they serve?

19. Is the valley symbolical, do you think? If so, of what? Why is Nunez content to lie on the mountains, not even looking at the beauty of the night? What do you think the mountain symbolizes?

20. Read the last two paragraphs again. Notice the visual imagery. Has this been noticeable before? Can you explain this?

21. Can you see any difference between point of view as attitude and point of view as narrative technique?

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Have you ever had difficulty communicating an idea to someone? If you have one point of view toward a controversial subject and your friend another, why is it important for you to "see" (not necessarily agree with) his point of view? Do you know people who are blind to any ideas other than their own? Explain in a paragraph why it is important for people to be able to see other views than their own.

2. In order to see for yourself the different worlds Nunez and the blind men "saw", describe the valley as it appeared to Nunez and then describe it as it seemed to the inhabitants. Remember to use concrete details and to be specific.

3. Try to visualize the little nation, the "Country of the Blind." Make a map showing the village, the farmland, the meadows, and the surrounding mountains. Then, using your map as a guide, write a paragraph describing the valley. In your Rhetoric Units last year, you learned to use certain organizing principles in your writing. Which would be most effective here?

4. When he discovered the valley, Nunez recalled the saying, "In the Country of the Blind the One-eyed Man is King." Think this statement over. What do you think it implies? Write a paragraph explaining what you think this means.

"A Double-Dyed Deceiver"

by O. Henry

INTRODUCTION

If a person has been imbued with certain ideas so thoroughly that he can no more change his opinions than a leopard can change his spots, we say that he is "dyed in the wool." Thus, when speaking of someone who refuses to eat any kind of meat, we might call him a dyed-in-the-wool vegetarian. Thacker, one of the characters in this story, calls the Kid a "double-dyed traitor." This is even stronger language than "dyed-in-the-wool." Why do you suppose the author changed the phrase to "A double-dyed deceiver" for the title of his story?

As you read the story, keep the title in mind. It will help to explain some of the techniques O. Henry uses as he writes this tale of deception. Read the story through completely before you prepare to discuss the study questions.

A DOUBLE-DYED DECEIVER

The trouble began in Laredo. It was the Llano Kid's fault, for he should have confined his habit of manslaughter to Mexicans. But the Kid was past twenty; and to have only Mexicans to one's credit at twenty is to blush unseen on the Rio Grande border.

It happened in old Justo Valdos's gambling house. There was a poker game at which sat players who were not all friends, as happens often where men ride in from afar to shoot Folly as she gallops. There was a row over so small a matter as a pair of queens; and when the smoke had cleared away it was found that the Kid had committed an indiscretion, and his adversary had been guilty of a blunder. For, the unfortunate combatant, instead of being a Greaser, was a high-blooded youth from the cow ranches, of about the Kid's own age and possessed of friends and champions. His blunder in missing the Kid's right ear only a sixteenth of an inch when he pulled his gun did not lessen the indiscretion of the better marksman.

The Kid, not being equipped with a retinue, nor bountifully supplied with personal admirers and supporters--on account of a rather umbrageous reputation, even for the border--considered it not incompatible with his indisputable gameness to perform that judicious tractional act known as "pulling his freight."

Quickly the avengers gathered and sought him. Three of them overtook him within a rod of the station. The Kid turned and showed his teeth in that brilliant but mirthless smile that usually preceded his deeds of insolence and violence, and his pursuers fell back without making it necessary for him even to reach for his weapon.

But in this affair the Kid had not felt the grim thirst for encounter that usually urged him on to battle. It had been a purely chance row, born of the cards and certain epithets impossible for a gentleman to brook that had passed between the two. The Kid had rather liked the slim, haughty, brown-faced young chap whom his bullet had cut off in the first pride of manhood. And now he wanted no more blood. He wanted to get away and have a good long sleep somewhere in the sun on the mesquit grass with his handkerchief over his face. Even a Mexican might have crossed his path in safety while he was in this mood.

The Kid openly boarded the north-bound passenger train that departed five minutes later. But at Webb, a few miles out, where it was flagged to take on a traveller, he abandoned that manner of escape. There were telegraph stations ahead; and the Kid looked askance at electricity and steam. Saddle and spur were his rocks of safety.

The man whom he had shot was a stranger to him. But the Kid knew that he was of the Coralitos outfit from Hidalgo; and that the punchers from that ranch were more relentless and vengeful than Kentucky feudists when wrong or harm was done to one of them. So, with the wisdom that has characterized many great fighters, the Kid decided to pile up as many leagues as possible of chaparral and pear between himself and the retaliation of the Coralitos bunch.

Near the station was a store; and near the store, scattered among the mesquits and elms, stood the saddled horses of the customers. Most of them waited, half asleep, with sagging limbs and drooping heads. But one, a long-legged roan with a curved neck, snorted and pawed the turf. Him the Kid mounted, gripped with his knees, and slapped gently with the owner's own quirt.

If the slaying of the temerarious card-player had cast a cloud over the Kid's standing as a good and true citizen, this last act of his veiled his figure in the darkest shadows of disrepute. On the Rio Grande border if you take a man's life you sometimes take trash; but if you take his horse, you take a thing the loss of which renders him poor, indeed, and which enriches you not--if you are caught. For the Kid there was no turning back now.

With the springing roan under him he felt little care or uneasiness. After a five-mile gallop he drew in to the plainsman's jogging trot, and rode northeastward toward the Nueces River bottoms. He knew the country well--its most tortuous and obscure trails through the great wilderness of brush and pear, and its camps and lonesome ranches where one might find safe entertainment. Always he bore to the east; for the Kid had never seen the ocean, and he had a fancy to lay his hand upon the mane of the great Gulf, the gamesome colt of the greater waters.

So after three days he stood on the shore at Corpus Christi, and looked out across the gentle ripples of a quiet sea.

Captain Boone, of the schooner *Flyaway*, stood near his skiff, which one of his crew was guarding in the surf. When ready to sail he had discovered that one of the necessaries of life, in the parallelogrammatic shape of plug tobacco, had been forgotten. A sailor had been dispatched for the missing cargo. Meanwhile the captain paced the sands, chewing profanely at his pocket store.

A slim, wiry youth in high-heeled boots came down to the water's edge. His face was boyish, but with a premature severity that hinted at a man's experience. His complexion was naturally dark; and the sun and wind of an outdoor life had burned it to a coffee brown. His hair was as black and straight as an Indian's; his face had not yet been upturned to the humiliation of a razor; his eyes were a cold and steady blue. He carried his left arm somewhat away from his body, for pearl-handled .45s are frowned upon by town marshals, and are a little bulky when packed in the left armhole of one's vest. He looked beyond Captain Boone at the gulf with the impersonal and expressionless dignity of a Chinese emperor.

"Thinkin' of buyin' that'ar gulf, buddy?" asked the captain, made sarcastic by his narrow escape from a tobaccoless voyage.

"Why, no," said the Kid gently, "I reckon not. I never saw it before. I was just looking at it. Not thinking of selling it, are you?"

"Not this trip," said the captain. "I'll send it to you C.O.D. when I get back to Buenas Tierras. Here comes that capstanfooted lubber with the chewin'. I ought to've weighed anchor an hour ago."

"Is that your ship out there?" asked the Kid.

"Why, yes," answered the captain, "if you want to call a schooner a ship, and I don't mind lyin'. But you better say Miller and Gonzales, owners, and ordinary plain, Billy-be-damned old Samuel K. Boone, skipper."

"Where are you going to?" asked the refugee.

"Buenas Tierras, coast of South America--I forgot what they called the country the last time I was there. Cargo--lumber, corrugated iron, and machetes."

"What kind of a country is it?" asked the Kid--"hot or cold?"

"Warmish, buddy," said the captain. "But a regular Paradise Lost for elegance of scenery and be-yooty of geography. Ye're wakened every morning by the sweet singin' of red birds with seven purple tails, and the sighin' of breezes in the posies and roses. And the inhabitants never work, for they can reach out and pick steamer baskets of the choicest hothouse fruit without gettin' out of bed. And there's no Sunday and no ice and no rent and no troubles and no use and no nothin'. It's a great country for a man to go to sleep with, and wait for somethin' to turn up. The bananys and oranges and hurricanes and pineapples that ye eat comes from there."

"That sounds to me!" said the Kid, at last betraying interest. "What'll the expressage be to take me out there with you?"

"Twenty-four dollars," said Captain Boone; "grub and transportation. Second cabin. I haven't got a first cabin."

"You've got my company," said the Kid, pulling out a buckskin bag.

With three hundred dollars he had gone to Laredo for his regular "blow-out." The duel in Valdos's had cut short his season of hilarity, but it had left him with nearly $200 for aid in the flight that it had made necessary.

"All right, buddy," said the captain. "I hope your ma won't blame me for this little childish escapade of yours." He beckoned to one of the boat's crew. "Let Sanchez lift you out to the skiff so you won't get your feet wet."

Thacker, the United States consul at Buenas Tierras, was not yet drunk. It was only eleven o'clock; and he never arrived at his desired state of beatitude--a state wherein he sang ancient maudlin vaudeville songs and pelted his screaming parrot with banana peels--until the middle of the afternoon. So, when he looked up from his hammock at the sound of a slight cough, and saw the Kid standing in the door of the consulate, he was still in a condition to extend the hospitality and courtesy due from the representative of a great nation. "Don't disturb yourself," said the Kid easily. "I just dropped in. They told me it was customary to light at your camp before starting in to round up the town. I just came in on a ship from Texas."

"Glad to see you, Mr. ----," said the consul.

The Kid laughed.

"Sprague Dalton," he said. "It sounds funny to me to hear it. I'm called the Llano Kid in the Rio Grande country."

"I'm Thacker," said the consul. "Take that cane-bottom chair. Now if you've come to invest, you want somebody to advise you. These dingies will cheat you out of the gold in your teeth if you don't understand their ways. Try a cigar?"

"Much obliged," said the Kid, "but if it wasn't for my corn shucks and the little bag in my back pocket I couldn't live a minute." He took out his "makings," and rolled a cigarette.

"They speak Spanish here," said the consul. "You'll need an interpreter. If there's anything I can do, why, I'd be delighted. If you're buying fruit lands or looking for a concession of any sort, you'll want somebody who knows the ropes to look out for you."

"I speak Spanish," said the Kid, "about nine times better than I do English. Everybody speaks it on the range where I come from. And I'm not in the market for anything."

"You speak Spanish?" said Thacker thoughtfully. He regarded the Kid absorbedly.

"You look like a Spaniard, too," he continued. "And you're from

Texas. And you can't be more than twenty or twenty-one. I wonder if you've got any nerve."

"You got a deal of some kind to put through?" asked the Texan, with unexpected shrewdness.

"Are you open to a proposition?" said Thacker.

"What's the use to deny it?" said the Kid. "I got into a little gun frolic down in Laredo and plugged a white man. There wasn't any Mexican handy. And I come down to your parrot-and-monkey range just for to smell the morning-glories and marigolds. Now, do you sabe?"

Thacker got up and closed the door.

"Let me see your hand," he said.

He took the Kid's left hand, and examined the back of it closely.

"I can do it," he said excitedly. "Your flesh is as hard as wood and as healthy as a baby's. It will heal in a week."

"If it's a fist fight you want to back me for," said the Kid, "don't put your money up yet. Make it gun work, and I'll keep you company. But no bare-handed scrapping, like ladies at a tea-party, for me."

"It's easier than that," said Thacker. "Just step here, will you?"

Through the window he pointed to a two-story white-stuccoed house with wide galleries rising amid the deep-green tropical foliage on a wooded hill that sloped gently from the sea.

"In that house," said Thacker, "a fine old Castilian gentleman and his wife are yearning to gather you into their arms and fill your pockets with money. Old Santos Urique lives there. He owns half the gold-mines in the country."

"You haven't been eating loco weed, have you?" asked the Kid.

"Sit down again," said Thacker, "and I'll tell you. Twelve years ago they lost a kid. No, he didn't die--although most of 'em here do from drinking the surface water. He was a wild little devil, even if he wasn't but eight years old. Everybody knows about it. Some Americans who were through here prospecting for gold had letters to Señor Urique, and the boy was a favourite with them. They filled his head with big stories about the States; and about a month after they left, the kid disappeared, too. He was supposed to have stowed himself away among the banana bunches on a fruit steamer, and gone to New Orleans. He was seen once afterward in Texas, it was thought, but they never heard anything more of him. Old Urique has spent thousands of dollars having him looked for. The madam was broken up worst of all. The kid was her life. She wears mourning yet. But they say she believes he'll come back to her some day, and never gives up hope. On the back of the boy's left hand was tattooed a flying eagle carrying a spear in his claws. That's old Urique's coat of arms or something that he inherited in Spain."

The Kid raised his left hand slowly and gazed at it curiously.

"That's it," said Thacker, reaching behind the official desk for his bottle of smuggled brandy. "You're not so slow. I can do it. What was I consul at Sandakan for? I never knew till now. In a week I'll have the eagle bird with the frog-sticker blended in so you'd think you were born with it. I brought a set of needles and ink just because I was sure you'd drop in some day, Mr. Dalton."

"Oh, hell," said the Kid. "I thought I told you my name!"

"All right, 'Kid,' then. It won't be that long. How does Señorito Urique sound, for a change?"

"I never played son any that I remember of," said the Kid. "If I had any parents to mention they went over the divide about the time I gave my first bleat. What is the plan of your round-up?"

Thacker leaned back against the wall and held his glass up to the light.

"We've come now," said he, "to the question of how far you're willing to go in a little matter of the sort."

"I told you why I came down here," said the Kid simply.

"A good answer," said the consul. "But you won't have to go that far. Here's the scheme. After I get the trademark tattooed on your hand I'll notify old Urique. In the meantime I'll furnish you with all the family history I can find out, so you can be studying up points to talk about. You've got the looks, you speak the Spanish, you know the facts, you can tell about Texas, you've got the tattoo mark. When I notify them that the rightful heir has returned and is waiting to know whether he will be received and pardoned what will happen? They'll simply rush down here and fall on your neck, and the curtain goes down for refreshments and a stroll in the lobby."

"I'm waiting," said the Kid. "I haven't had my saddle off in your camp long, pardner, and I never met you before; but if you intend to let it go at a parental blessing, why, I'm mistaken in my man, that's all."

"Thanks," said the consul. "I haven't met anybody in a long time that keeps up with an argument as well as you do. The rest of it is simple. If they take you in only for a while it's long enough. Don't give 'em time to hunt up the strawberry mark on your left shoulder. Old Urique keeps anywhere from $50,000 to $100,000 in his house all the time in a little safe that you could open with a shoe buttoner. Get it. My skill as a tattooer is worth half of the boodle. We go halves and catch a tramp steamer for Rio Janeiro. Let the United States go to pieces if it can't get along without my services. Que dice, señor?"

"It sounds to me!" said the Kid, nodding his head. "I'm out for the dust."

"All right, then," said Thacker. "You'll have to keep close until we get the bird on you. You can live in the back room here. I do my own cooking, and I'll make you as comfortable as a parsimonious Government will allow me."

Thacker had set the time at a week, but it was two weeks before the design that he patiently tattooed upon the Kid's hand was to his notion. And then Thacker called a *muchacho*, and dispatched this note to the intended victim:

El Señor Don Santos Urique,
La Casa Blanca,

My Dear Sir:
I beg permission to inform you that there is in my house as a temporary guest a young man who arrived in Buenas Tierras from the United States some days ago. Without wishing to excite any hopes that may not be realized, I think there is a possibility of his being your long-absent son. It might be well for you to call and see him. If he is, it is my opinion that his intention was to return to his home, but upon arriving here, his courage failed him from doubts as to how he would be received.

Your true servant,

THOMPSON THACKER.

Half an hour afterward--quick time for Buenas Tierras--Señor Urique's ancient landau drove to the consul's door, with the barefooted coachman beating and shouting at the team of fat, awkward horses.

A tall man with a white moustache alighted, and assisted to the ground a lady who was dressed and veiled in unrelieved black.

The two hastened inside, and were met by Thacker with his best diplomatic bow. By his desk stood a slender young man with clear-cut, sunbrowned features and smoothly brushed black hair.

Señora Urique threw back her heavy veil with a quick gesture. She was past middle age, and her hair was beginning to silver, but her full, proud figure and clear olive skin retained traces of the beauty peculiar to the Basque province. But, once you had seen her eyes, and comprehended the great sadness that was revealed in their deep shadows and hopeless expression, you saw that the woman lived only in some memory.

She bent upon the young man a long look of the most agonizing questioning. Then her great black eyes turned, and her gaze rested upon his left hand. And then with a sob, not loud, but seeming to shake the room, she cried "*Hijo mio*!" and caught the Llano Kid to her heart.

A month afterward the Kid came to the consulate in response to a message sent by Thacker.

He looked the young Spanish *caballero*. His clothes were imported, and the wiles of the jewellers had not been spent upon him in vain. A more than respectable diamond shone on his finger as he rolled a shuck cigarette.

"What's doing?" asked Thacker.

"Nothing much," said the Kid calmly. "I eat my first iguana steak to-day. They're them big lizards, you sabe? I reckon, though, that frijoles and side bacon would do me about as well. Do you care for iguanas, Thacker?"

"No, nor for some other kinds of reptiles," said Thacker.

It was three in the afternoon, and in another hour he would be in his state of beatitude.

"It's time you were making good, sonny," he went on, with an ugly look on his reddened face. "You're not playing up to me square. You've been the prodigal son for four weeks now, and you could have had veal for every meal on a gold dish if you'd wanted it. Now, Mr. Kid, do you think it's right to leave me out so long on a husk diet? What's the trouble? Don't you get your filial eyes on anything that looks like cash in the Casa Blanca? Don't tell me you don't. Everybody knows where old Urique keeps his stuff. It's U.S. currency, too; he don't accept anything else. What's doing? Don't say 'nothing' this time."

"Why, sure," said the Kid, admiring his diamond, "there's plenty of money up there. I'm no judge of collateral in bunches, but I will undertake for to say that I've seen the rise of $50,000 at a time in that tin grub box that my adopted father calls his safe. And he lets me carry the key sometimes just to show me that he knows I'm the real little Francisco that strayed from the herd a long time ago."

"Well, what are you waiting for?" asked Thacker angrily. "Don't you forget that I can upset your apple-cart any day I want to. If old Urique knew you were an impostor, what sort of things would happen to you? Oh, you don't know this country, Mr. Texas Kid. The laws here have got mustard spread between 'em. These people here'd stretch you out like a frog that had been stepped on, and give you about fifty sticks at every corner of the plaza. And they'd wear every stick out, too. What was left of you they'd feed to alligators."

"I might as well tell you now, pardner," said the Kid, sliding down low on his steamer chair, "that things are going to stay just as they are. They're about right now."

"What do you mean?" asked Thacker, rattling the bottom of his glass on his desk.

"The scheme's off," said the Kid. "And whenever you have the pleasure of speaking to me address me as Don Francisco Urique. I'll guarantee I'll answer to it. We'll let Colonel Urique keep his money. His little tin safe is as good as the time-locker in the First National Bank of Laredo as far as you and me are concerned."

"You're going to throw me down, then, are you?" said the consul.

"Sure," said the Kid cheerfully. "Throw you down. That's it. And now I'll tell you why. The first night I was up at the colonel's house they introduced me to a bedroom. No blankets on the floor--a real room, with a bed and things in it. And before I was asleep, in comes this artificial mother of mine and tucks in the covers. 'Panchito,' she says, 'my little lost one, God has brought you back to me. I bless His name forever.' It was that, or some truck like that, she said. And down comes a drop or two of rain and hits me on the nose. And all that stuck by me, Mr. Thacker. And it's been that way ever since. And it's got to stay that way. Don't you think that it's for what's in it for me, either, that I say so. If you have any such ideas, keep 'em to yourself. I haven't had much truck with women in my life, and no mothers to speak of, but here's a lady that we've got to keep fooled. Once she stood it; twice she won't. I'm a low-down wolf, and the devil may have sent me on this trail instead of God, but I'll travel it to the end. And now, don't forget that I'm Don Francisco Urique whenever you happen to mention my name."

"I'll expose you to-day, you--you double-dyed traitor," stammered Thacker.

The Kid arose and, without violence, took Thacker by the throat with a hand of steel, and shoved him slowly into a corner. Then he drew from under his left arm his pearl-handled .45 and poked the cold muzzle of it against the consul's mouth.

"I told you why I come here," he said, with his old freezing smile. "If I leave here, you'll be the reason. Never forget it, pardner. Now, what is my name?"

"Er--Don Francisco Urique," gasped Thacker.

From outside came a sound of wheels, and the shouting of some one, and the sharp thwacks of a wooden whipstock upon the backs of fat horses.

The Kid put up his gun, and walked toward the door. But he turned and came back to the trembling Thacker, and held up his left hand with its back toward the consul.

"There's one more reason," he said slowly, "why things have got to stand as they are. The fellow I killed in Laredo had one of them same pictures on his left hand."

Outside, the ancient landau of Don Santos Urique rattled to the door. The coachman ceased his bellowing. Señora Urique, in a voluminous gay gown of white lace and flying ribbons, leaned forward with a happy look in her great soft eyes.

"Are you within, dear son?" she called, in the rippling Castilian.

"Madre mia, yo vengo [mother, I come]," answered the young Don Francisco Urique.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you suppse that O. Henry did not reveal until the end of the story that the man the Kid had killed in Laredo was the Urique heir? Is there any clue earlier in the story that might have led you to this conclusion? If this piece of information had been put in the beginning, would the story have been as interesting?

2. Is the Kid's change of heart at the end of the story convincing? Are you convinced of his concern for his "mother" that makes him stay on in the rolê of Francisco Urique? Is there a possibility that he had planned in advance to maintain his new identity? Can you find evidence in the story to support your opinion?

3. How many examples of coincidence can you find in the story? Are the coincidences plausible? What part do they play in shaping the story?

4. What do you know about the Kid? Do you follow his story with any emotion? Why or why not? Is this deliberate on the part of the author, or is it a weakness in the story?

5. Most literary works have subjects that can be discussed on various levels, apart from the story line itself. The ideas, or abstract subjects, are usually about important aspects of human existence. Are there any such ideas conveyed through this story? If so, do they seem significant to you?

6. Much of the story is told through dialogue. What do the Kid's conversations with both Captain Boone and Thacker reveal about all three characters? What else does O. Henry accomplish through this method of story telling?

7. Look again at the beginning of the story. Compare the style of this language with the conversations you have just discussed. Does it seem appropriate to the subject of the story? Now that you know how the story ends, can you see any reason for O. Henry to adopt this tone in the beginning? Does it in any way reveal the author's attitude toward his subject?

8. Why does the author suddenly jump from the Kid boarding the ship to his calling on Thacker in his office, without any transition whatsoever? Later in the story, a whole month elapses between the ending of one paragraph and the beginning of the next. Does this remind you of any other type of literature you have studied? How does this technique contribute to the effect the author is trying to produce?

9. Which of the characters appear to be types or stock characters? What details has O. Henry used to suggest this impression?

10. Has the author sentimentalized the character of Senora Urique? (Better look this word up in your dictionary.) How does this affect your attitude to the deception the Kid uses on her?

11. Does the title prepare you for the outcome of the story? Is the ending a satisfying one? Give reasons for your answers.

12. What are the major conflicts of the story? How are they used to build suspense?

13. Explain the allusion to The Prodigal Son. Why is it ironic used in this story. What other examples of irony can you find?

14. What impression does this story leave you with? What popular form of modern entertainment does it resemble? Is it close to real life? Do you think it was intended to be?

15. How many instances of deception can you find in the story? Is the Kid the only deceiver?

16. (For better students.) Relate the following critical evaluation to "The Double -Dyed Deceiver": In O. Henry's stories there is always a working criss-cross, a plot of cross purposes. There usually is a series of cheap jokes, laundered and expanded. He gives you a peep at life but it is hasty, flippant, superficial, and written for sensational effects. But he is a master trickster, a player with incidents and words.

SUGGESTED EXERCISES AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. List the events of the story in the order in which they happened, labeling them a, b, c, etc. Next, draw a diagram of the rising and falling action of the plot, using the a, b, c labels from the incidents you have listed. Which incident do you think marks the high point of the story? Give your reasons.

2. The setting plays a very important part in "A Double - Dyed Deceiver." Skim through the story to find references to the geography, the type of country, and the relationship between the Spanish-speaking people and the Americans.

   a) Locate on a map the places mentioned; Laredo, the Rio Grande, Nueces River, Corpus Christi, the Gulf of Mexico, Hidalgo.
   b) If you are not familiar with the terms; mesquite, chaparral, and prickly pear, use the dictionary to find out the meanings.
   c) Consult an encyclopedia to find out something about the history of Spain and the United States in the Gulf Coast region of America.

   When you have completed your research, write a few paragraphs describing life along the Rio Grande border at the time the story was written.

3. Using evidence from the story, write a character sketch of the Llano Kid. Try to decide whether or not he is completely phony. Is he sincere in his statement to Thacker that pity for Señora Urique has motivated his final decision? Give reasons for your opinions.

4. Study the conversation between Thacker and the Kid at their first meeting. Notice how Thacker's character is revealed as he speaks. What else does the reader discover through the conversation?
Write a similar scene between Señora Urique and the Kid, using conversation to reveal the kind of woman you imagine Señora Urique to be, and getting across to the reader anything else it may be important for him to know.

A MYSTERY OF HEROISM

by Stephen Crane

INTRODUCTION

The story records an incident in the War Between the States. Crane has written about it so dramatically that you will feel almost as though you were an onlooker. Read it through without interruption, then spend a little time thinking about your response to the story. How did you feel as you read it? Did it set you to thinking about the nature of heroism? Did you recall experiences of your own brought to mind by the story?

The dark uniforms of the men were so coated with dust from the incessant wrestling of the two armies that the regiment almost seemed a part of the clay bank which shielded them from the shells. On the top of the hill a battery was arguing in tremendous roars with some other guns, and to the eye of the infantry the artillerymen, the guns, the caissons, the horses, were distinctly outlined upon the blue sky. When a piece was fired, a red streak as round as a log flashed low in the heavens, like a monstrous bolt of lightning. The men of the battery wore white duck trousers, which somehow emphasized their legs; and when they ran and crowded in little groups at the bidding of the shouting officers, it was more impressive than usual to the infantry.

Fred Collins, of A Company, was saying: "Thunder! I wisht I had a drink. Ain't there any water round here?" Then somebody yelled: "There goes th' bugler!"

As the eyes of half the regiment swept in one machinelike movement, there was an instant's picture of a horse in a great convulsive leap of a death wound and a rider leaning back with a crooked arm and spread fingers before his face. On the ground was the crimson terror of an exploding shell, with fibers of flame that seemed like lances. A glittering bugle swung clear of the rider's back as fell headlong the horse and the man. In the air was an odor as from a conflagration.

Sometimes they of the infantry looked down at a fair little meadow which spread at their feet. Its long green grass was rippling gently in a breeze. Beyond it was the gray form of a house half torn to pieces by shells and by the busy axes of soldiers who had pursued firewood. The line of an old fence was now dimly marked by long weeds and by an occasional post. A shell had blown the well-house to fragments. Little lines of gray smoke ribboning upward from some embers indicated the place where had stood the barn.

From beyond a curtain of green woods there came the sound of some stupendous scuffle, as if two animals of the size of islands were fighting. At a distance there were occasional appearances of swift-moving men, horses, batteries, flags, and with the crashing of infantry volleys were heard, often, wild and frenzied cheers. In the midst of it all Smith and Ferguson, two privates of A Company, were engaged in a heated discussion which involved the greatest questions of the national existence.

The battery on the hill presently engaged in a frightful duel. The white legs of the gunners scampered this way and that way, and the officers redoubled their shouts. The guns, with their demeanors of stolidity and courage, were typical of something infinitely self-possessed in this clamor of death that swirled around the hill.

One of a "swing" team was suddenly smitten quivering to the ground, and his maddened brethren dragged his torn body in their struggle to escape from this turmoil and danger. A young soldier astride one of the leaders swore and fumed in his saddle and furiously jerked at the bridle. An officer screamed out an order so violently that his voice broke and ended the sentence in a falsetto shriek.

The leading company of the infantry regiment was somewhat exposed, and the colonel ordered it moved more fully under the shelter of the hill. There was the clank of steel against steel.

A lieutenant of the battery rode down and passed them, holding his right arm carefully in his left hand. And it was as if this arm was not at all a part of him, but belonged to another man. His sober and reflective charger went slowly. The officer's face was grimy and perspiring, and his uniform was tousled as if he had been in direct grapple with an enemy. He smiled grimly when the men stared at him. He turned his horse toward the meadow.

Collins, of A Company, said: "I wisht I had a drink. I bet there's water in that there ol' well yonder!"

"Yes; but how you goin' to git it?"

For the little meadow which intervened was now suffering a terrible onslaught of shells. Its green and beautiful calm had vanished utterly. Brown earth was being flung in monstrous handfuls. And there was a massacre of the young blades of grass. They were being torn, burned, obliterated. Some curious fortune of the battle had made this gentle little meadow the object of the red hate of the shells, and each one as it exploded seemed like an imprecation in the face of a maiden.

The wounded officer who was riding across this expanse said to himself: "Why, they couldn't shoot any harder if the whole army was massed here!"

A shell struck the gray ruins of the house, and as, after the roar, the shattered wall fell in fragments, there was a noise which resembled the flapping of shutters during a wild gale of winter. Indeed, the infantry paused in the shelter of the bank appeared as men standing upon a shore contemplating a madness of the sea. The angel of calamity had under its glance the battery upon the hill. Fewer white-legged men labored about the guns. A shell had smitten one of the pieces, and after the flare, the smoke, the dust, the wrath of this blow were gone, it was possible to see white legs stretched horizontally upon the ground. And at that interval to the rear where it is the business of battery horses to stand with their noses to the fight, awaiting the command to drag their guns out of the destruction, or into it, or wheresoever these incomprehensible humans demanded with whip and spur--in this line of passive and dumb spectators, whose fluttering hearts yet would not let them forget the iron laws of man's control of them--in this rank of brute soldiers there had been relentless and hideous carnage. From the ruck of bleeding and prostrate horses, the men of the infantry could see one animal raising its stricken body with its forelegs and turning its nose with mystic and profound eloquence toward the sky.

Some comrades joked Collins about his thirst. "Well, if yeh want a drink so bad, why don't yeh go git it?"

"Well, I will in a minnet, if yeh don't shut up!"

A lieutenant of artillery floundered his horse straight down the hill with as little concern as if it were level ground. As he galloped past the colonel of the infantry, he threw up his hand in swift salute. "We've got to get out of that," he roared angrily. He was a black-bearded officer, and his eyes, which resembled beads, sparkled like those of an insane man. His jumping horse sped along the column of infantry.

The fat major, standing carelessly with his sword held horizontally behind him and with his legs far apart, looked after the receding horseman and laughed. "He wants to get back with orders pretty quick, or there'll be no batt'ry left," he observed.

The wise young captain of the second company hazarded to the lieutenant colonel that the enemy's infantry would probably soon attack the hill, and the lieutenant colonel snubbed him.

A private in one of the rear companies looked out over the meadow, and then turned to a companion and said, "Look there, Jim!" It was the wounded officer from the battery, who some time before had started to ride across the meadow, supporting his right arm carefully with his left hand. This man had encountered a shell apparently at a time when no one perceived him, and he could now be seen lying face downward with a stirruped foot stretched across the body of his dead horse. A leg of the charger extended slantingly upward, precisely as stiff as a stake. Around this motionless pair the shells still howled.

There was a quarrel in A Company. Collins was shaking his fist in the faces of some laughing comrades. "Dern yeh! I ain't afraid t'go. If yeh say much, I will go!"

"Of course, yeh will! You'll run through that there medder, won't yeh?"

Collins said, in a terrible voice: "You see now!" At this ominous threat his comrades broke into renewed jeers.

Collins gave them a dark scowl, and went to find his captain. The latter was conversing with the colonel of the regiment.

"Captain," said Collins, saluting and standing at atten tion--in those days all trousers bagged at the knees--"Captain, I want t' git permission to go git some water from that there well over yonder!"

The colonel and the captain swung about simultaneously and stared across the meadow. The captain laughed. "You must be pretty thirsty, Collins?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Well--ah," said the captain. After a moment, he asked, "Can't you wait?"

"No, sir."

The colonel was watching Collins's face. "Look here, my lad," he said, in a pious sort of voice--"look here, my lad"--Collins was not a lad--"don't you think that's taking pretty big risks for a little drink of water?"

"I dunno," said Collins uncomfortably. Some of the resentment toward his companions, which perhaps had forced him into this affair, was beginning to fade. "I dunno wether 'tis."

The colonel and the captain contemplated him for a time.

"Well," said the captain finally.

"Well," said the colonel, "if you want to go, why, go."

Collins saluted. "Much obliged t'yeh."

As he moved away the colonel called after him. "Take some of the other boys' canteens with you, an' hurry back, now."

"Yes, sir, I will."

The colonel and the captain looked at each other then, for it had suddenly occurred that they could not for the life of them tell whether Collins wanted to go or whether he did not.

They turned to regard Collins, and as they perceived him surrounded by gesticulating comrades, the colonel said: "Well, by thunder! I guess he's going."

Collins appeared as a man draming. In the midst of the questions, the advice, the warnings, all the excited talk of his company mates, he maintained a curious silence.

They were very busy in preparing him for his ordeal. When they inspected him carefully, it was somewhat like the examination that grooms give a horse before a race; and they were amazed, staggered, by the whole affair. Their astonishment found vent in strange repetitions.

"Are yeh sure a-goin'?" they demanded again and again.

"Certainly I am," cried Collins at last, furiously.

He strode sullenly away from them. He was swinging five or six canteens by their cords. It seemed that his cap would not remain firmly on his head, and often he reached and pulled it down over his brow.

There was a general movement in the compact column. The long animal-like thing moved slightly. Its four hundred eyes were turned upon the figure of Collins.

"Well, sir, if that ain't th' derndest thing! I never thought Fred Collins had the blood in him for that kind of business."

"What's he goin' to do, anyhow?"

"He's goin' to that well there after water."

"We ain't dyin' of thirst, are we? That's foolishness."

"Well, somebody put him up to it, an' he's doin' it."

"Say, he must be a desperate cuss."

When Collins faced the meadow and walked away from the regiment, he was vaguely conscious that a chasm, the deep valley of all prides, was suddenly between him and his comrades. It was provisional, but the provision was that he return as a victor. He had blindly been led by quaint emotions, and laid himself under an obligation to walk squarely up to the face of death.

But he was not sure that he wished to make a retraction, even if he could do so without shame. As a matter of truth, he was sure of very little. He was mainly surprised.

It seemed to him supernaturally strange that he had allowed his mind to maneuver his body into such a situation. He understood that it might be called dramatically great.

However, he had no full appreciation of anything, excepting that he was actually conscious of being dazed. He could feel his dulled mind groping after the form and color of this incident. He wondered why he did not feel some keen agony of fear cutting his sense like a knife. He wondered at this, because human expression had said loudly for centuries that men should feel afraid of certain things, and that all men who did not feel this fear were phenomena--heroes.

He was, then, a hero. He suffered that disappointment which we would all have if we discovered that we were ourselves capable of those deeds which we most admire in history and legend. This, then, was a hero. After all, heroes were not much.

No, it could not be true. He was not a hero. Heroes had no shames in their lives, and, as for him, he remembered borrowing fifteen dollars from a friend and promising to pay it back the next day, and then avoiding that friend for ten months. When, at home, his mother had aroused him for the early labor of his life on the farm, it had often been his fashion to be irritable, childish, diabolical; and his mother had died since he had come to the war.

He saw that, in this matter of the well, the canteens, the shells, he was an intruder in the land of fine deeds.

He was now about thirty paces from his comrades. The regiment had just turned its many faces toward him.

From the forest of terrific noises there suddenly emerged a little uneven line of men. They fired fiercely and rapidly at distant foliage on which appeared little puffs of white smoke. The spatter of skirmish firing was added to the thunder of the guns on the hill. The little line of men ran forward. A color sergeant fell flat with his flag as if he had slipped on ice. There was hoarse cheering from this distant field.

Collins suddenly felt that two demon fingers were pressed into his ears. He could see nothing but flying arrows, flaming red. He lurched from the shock of this explosion, but he made a mad rush for the house, which he viewed as a man submerged to the neck in a boiling surf might view the shore. In the air little pieces of shell howled, and the earthquake explosions drove him insane with the menace of their roar. As he ran the canteens knocked together with a rhythmical tinkling.

As he neared the house, each detail of the scene became vivid to him. He was aware of some bricks of the vanished chimney lying on the sod. There was a door which hung by one hinge.

Rifle bullets called forth by the insistent skirmishers came from the far-off bank of foliage. They mingled with the shells and the pieces of shells until the air was torn in all directions by hootings, yells, howls. The sky was full of fiends who directed all their wild rage at his head.

When he came to the well, he flung himself face downward and peered into its darkness. There were furtive silver glintings some feet from the surface. He grabbed one of the canteens and, unfastening its cap, swung it down by the cord. The water flowed slowly in with an indolent gurgle.

And now, as he lay with his face turned away, he was suddenly smitten with the terror. It came upon his heart like the grasp of claws. All the power faded from his muscles. For an instant he was no more than a dead man.

The canteen filled with a maddening slowness, in the manner of all bottles. Presently he recovered his strength and addressed a screaming oath to it. He leaned over until it seemed as if he intended to try to push water into it with his hands. His eyes as he gazed down into the well shone like two pieces of metal, and in their expression was a great appeal and a great curse. The stupid water derided him.

There was the blaring thunder of a shell. Crimson light shone through the swift-boiling smoke, and made a pink reflection on part of the wall of the well. Collins jerked out his arm and canteen with the same motion that a man would use in withdrawing his head from a furnace.

He scrambled erect and glared and hesitated. On the ground near him lay the old well bucket, with a length of rusty chain. He lowered it swiftly into the well. The bucket struck the water and then, turning lazily over, sank. When, with hand reaching tremblingly over hand, he hauled it out, it knocked often against the walls of the well and spilled some of its contents.

In running with a filled bucket, a man can adopt but one kind of gait. So, through this terrible field over which screamed practical angels of death, Collins ran in the manner of a farmer chased out of a dairy by a bull.

His face went staring white with anticipating--anticipation of a blow that would whirl him around and down. He would fall as he had seen other men fall, the life knocked out of them so suddenly that their knees were no more quick to touch the ground than their heads. He saw the long blue line of the regiment, but his comrades were standing looking at him from the edge of an impossible star. He was aware of some deep wheelruts and hoofprints in the sod beneath his feet.

The artillery officer who had fallen in this meadow had been making groans in the teeth of the tempest of sound. These futile cries, wrenched from him by his agony, were heard only by shells, bullets. When wild-eyed Collins came running, this officer raised himself. His face contorted and blanched from pain, he was about to utter some great beseeching cry. But suddenly his face straightened, and he called: "Say, young man, give me a drink of water, will you?"

Collins had no room amid his emotions for surprise. He was mad from the threats of destruction.

"I can't!" he screamed, and in his reply was a full description of his quaking apprehension. His cap was gone and his hair was riotous. His clothes made it appear that he had been dragged over the ground by the heels. He ran on.

The officer's head sank down, and one elbow crooked. His foot in its brass-bound stirrup still stretched over the body of his horse, and the other leg was under the steed.

But Collins turned. He came dashing back. His face had now turned gray, and in his eyes was all terror. "Here it is! here it is!"

The officer was as a man gone in drink. His arm bent like a twig. His head drooped as if his neck were of willow. He was sinking to the ground, to lie face downward.

Collins grabbed him by the shoulder. "Here it is. Here's your drink. Turn over. Turn over, man, for God's sake!"

With Collins hauling at his shoulder, the officer twisted his body and fell with his face turned toward that region where lived the unspeakable noises of the swirling missiles. There was the faintest shadow of a smile on his lips as he looked at Collins. He gave a sigh, a little primitive breath like that from a child.

Collins tried to hold the bucket steadily, but his shaking hands caused the water to splash all over the face of the dying man. Then he jerked it away and ran on.

The regiment gave him a welcoming roar. The grimed faces were wrinkled in laughter.

His captain waved the bucket away. "Give it to the men!"

The two genial, skylarking young lieutenants were the first to gain possession of it. They played over it in their fashion.

When one tried to drink, the other teasingly knocked his elbow. "Don't Billie! You'll make me spill it," said the one. The other laughed.

Suddenly there was an oath, the thud of wood on the ground, and a swift murmur of astonishment among the ranks. The two lietenants glared at each other. The bucket lay on the ground empty.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Does the story follow the typical narrative pattern of beginning, middle, and end? What are the main events in the order in which they happened? Do these events by themselves provide the main interest of the story? Why or why not?

2. On the surface level, the story is about a soldier who goes after some water in the middle of a battle field. What is the subject on a deeper level?

3. Why does Collins go after the water? Is his action entirely voluntary, or do circumstances beyond his control force him into it?

4. Have you ever known anyone like Fred Collins? Does he strike you as being a real person? Read again Crane's description of Collins's feelings as he crossed the battle field. Is it plausible? You may remember Saint-Exupéry made a similar discovery when he found he was quite without emotion as he battled the storm in his plane. Talking about the experience afterwards, in "The Elements" from Wind, Sand and Stars, he said:

> "There is nothing dramatic in the world, nothing pathetic, except in human relations."

In other words, horror is not present while something happens; it can only be looked at with horror afterwards. Why do you think terror struck Collins as he filled the water canteen?

5. Was Collins really a hero, or was his action foolish? Is there any element of true heroism in his action? What is the difference between courage and foolhardiness?

6. Why is heroism a mystery? Discuss the appropriateness of the title in the light of the story. How does it imply the problem of appearance and reality as it is present in this story?

7. Why did the men goad Collins into going for the water? Do you think they really expected him to do it? What was their reaction when he went? How did they greet his return? Do you think they regarded him as a hero?

8. Read again the passage beginning on p. 91 where the dying artillery officer asks Collins for a drink of water. Why did he suppress the groans, and calmly ask for a drink? Was this courage? Why do you think the author put the episode into the story at this point?

9. In a moment of crisis, details that may be quite irrelevant to what is happening sometimes make a vivid impression upon us. The seeming unreality of the situation is heightened by an awareness of the actual reality of these things. Crane mentions the white legs of the gunners, for example. What other details can you find used by the author to create the feeling of emergency? How are the impressions often made more

vivid by the use of simile and metaphor? Find and comment upon a few that you feel to be most effective.

10. Find examples in the story that illustrate how Crane has sometimes used contrast to heighten the effect of the impression he wishes to create.

11. Do you find any irony in the way the story ends? Might the title itself be ironic? Are there other touches of irony in the story? Does the ironic tone give you a clue to the author's Point of View?

12. Might the bucket of water be interpreted as a symbol? Could the author be using the incident to point up something about life that he feels is significant? Did Crane have a purpose beyond presenting an entertaining story?

13. Compare this statement made by Crane himself with what you understood about O. Henry through "The Double - Dyed Deceiver": "I renounced the clever school in literature. It seemed to me that there must be something more in life than to sit and cudgel one's brains for the clever and witty expedients."

14. The author allows himself to be omniscient. How does this affect the story?

EXERCISES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPOSITION

1. Using your dictionary, find the meaning and derivation for each word underlined in the text of the story: conflagration, demeanor, imprecation, calamity, carnage, gesticulating, retraction, indolent, blanched.
What did you notice about the derivation of every word except the last? What does this tell you about our language? Can you replace these words with simpler, more often used words? Can you explain this? Find other words that are derived from the same Latin root as carnage. Explain how the modern English meaning was derived from the Latin.

2. Much of the vividness of Crane's writing comes from his use of simile and metaphor to convey an exact image to the mind of the reader. Look again at some of the examples you discussed in class. Try to create similar metaphors and similes to bring to life descriptions of some of the following:
a) a swimmer, diving into the water and swimming;
b) a mother duck leading her ducklings to the river;
c) a sky-diver making a parachute jump;
d) a train viewed from the air;
e) a sudden shower of rain;
f) a child wading through a puddle;
g) anything else you would like to describe.

3. Write an account of an experience that was frightening for you. Try to describe exactly how you felt both at the time, and afterwards.

4. Is heroism simply the absence of fear in a dangerous situation? Is it possible for a hero to experience fear? Write a definition of heroism as you understand it, and give examples that illustrate yourview.

5. With the help of your teacher or librarian, find another story by Stephen Crane. Read it and then write a report, after you have studied the story in the same way you looked at "A Mystery of Heroism." Be sure to discuss what the story is about both on the surface level (the plot), and on a deeper level. Sometimes this general idea is called the theme. Have the details of the story been selected by the author to point up the theme? How important is the setting? How is it developed? Is it given at the beginning, or scattered throughout the story? Is it needed for the theme? Does it help to explain the characters Does it create a mood or atmosphere? Is it essential to the plot? Are the characters true to life? What impression does the story leave you with?

Some of the titles you might enjoy reading are: "The Open Boat," "The Blue Hotel," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "The Grey Sleeve," The Red Badge of Courage (which is sometimes considered a short novel).

With your teacher's permission, you may prepare this as an oral report to be given to the class.

6. Go to the library and find a historical account of a Civil War battle. Compare this account with Crane's description of the battle in "A Mystery of Heroism." Do the historian and the writer have the same purpose in writing? Does this explain their different Point of View? Write a few paragraphs discussing this question, using illustrations from the two accounts that point up the differences.

"Jupiter Doke, Brigadier General"

by Ambrose Bierce

INTRODUCTION

This story is presented to you through letter, memorandum, diary, and disposition. Thus, you will read multiple points of view of particular actions and events. That is how the humor is developed. Through careful reading you can discover both satire and irony in this story of a make-believe and highly improbably event in Northern Kentucky during the Civil War.

(For text, see The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce, vol. 8, The Neale Publishing Company, New York, 1911, pp. 23-40.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Re-phrase the first letter from Jupiter Doke to the Secretary of War as a simple, honest statement. What is the effect of such phrases as "In times that try men's souls"?

2. Give a character sketch of General Doke. Doke's actions, as well as his statements, have to be taken into account.

3. Reading between the lines in a story such as this, with its purposely stilted phrasing is necessary in order to catch much of the humor. Why for instance, is there only one letter from General Wardorg to General Doke? What does Wardorg's receipt of Doke's letter "through the courtesy of the Confederate department commander under a flag of truce," imply? Does this have any bearing on Wardorg's statement in his next letter to the Secretary of War, "I think him a fool"?

4. You may or may not find the deaths of so many men humorous (almost all of 25,000 Confederate soldiers), but the author intended it to be so. What saves it from being tragic? Is it possible to be humorous and bitter at the same time? Is there any bitterness here?

5. What is the actual cause of the disaster? Do you see anything beyond simple irony in the commendation and promotion of Jupiter Doke?

6. How many differences in point of view can you find between the two Civil War stories (this one, and Crane's "A Mystery of Heroism")? Does either writer take sides--that is, is one a Northerner and the other a Southerner?

7. Do these two writers have different purposes? If so, would you say that these different purposes have something to do with the respective forms of the two stories?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

1. Imagine an automobile accident (or an accident involving a bicycle or pedestrian). Write four one-paragraph descriptions of the accident from four different points of view; those of two people involved in the accident, and those of two independent witnesses. Make the effect humorous.

2. Discuss heroism as shown both by Crane and by Bierce. Can you find any similar ideas on the subject? There is irony in both stories. Are they both humorous? Can you draw any sort of general conclusion about heroism?

"On Saturday Afternoon"

by Alan Sillitoe

INTRODUCTION

In this story you will find a boy narrating an event that he witnessed several years previously. His own subjective interpretation may not be the most satisfactory one. You will have to think carefully about the event itself and the boy's view of it.

If you like this story you might want to read Sillitoe's short novel, The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner.

(For text, see Points of View, ed. James Moffett and Kenneth R. McElheny, The New American Library, New York, 1966; pp. 197-204.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What impression does the author give you when he tells you how much he enjoyed seeing "a real bloke stringing himself up?" What kind of person do you expect the narrator to be after the first paragraph?
2. What does the boy's attitude toward the attempted suicide have to do with his attitude about his parents and his neighborhood?
3. Do social and economic conditions have something to do with the boy's attitude? "But outside the air wasn't so fresh, what with that bloody great bike factory bashing away at the yard end." Pick out some remarks like this that may support this idea.
4. There seems to be an irresistible fascination for the boy to watch the "bloke" hang himself. Why do you suppose that is? Is it really because he is bored and had not been able to go to the Saturday afternoon pictures?
5. What does the boy mean when he says, "I wasn't a bit frightened, like I might be now at sixteen, because it was interesting. And being only ten I'd never had a chance to see a bloke hang himself before"? Does this affect the tone?
6. There are three occasions when the boy sucks his thumb. Is there anything especially significant about each separate time, or are they all part of one behavior pattern?
7. In a short story nothing can be wasted. What then does the boy really mean when he says, "I slammed his gate so hard with disappointment that it nearly dropped off its hinges"?
8. Why is it ironic when the "copper" said, "You'll get five years for this," and the bloke answered back, "That's what yo' think. . . . I only wanted to hang myself."

9. The narrator is telling something about himself as well as about an attempted suicide, although he seems unaware that he is. What do you know about the boy by the time he says, "Trust me. I'll stay alive half barmy till I'm a hundred and five, and then go out screaming blue murder because I want to stay where I am."?

10. Could this story have been presented as well in the third person? What kinds of changes in structure would have had to be made?

"Butcher Bird"

by Wallace Stegner

INTRODUCTION

"Butcher Bird" is, like "On Saturday Afternoon," an episode told from a boy's point of view. But this time the story is told in the third person. As in "On Saturday Afternoon" this event has great significance for the boy. However, you will find that the characters do not make comments on the significance of an action. The author lets you see the people and events through a boy's eyes, but he lets you interpret them as you would have to in real life.

(For text, see The Art of Modern Fiction ed. Ray B. West, Jr. and Robert Wooster Stallman, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1960; pp. 349-358.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "The hot midsummer afternoon was still and breathless, the air harder to breathe than usual." This sentence seems to set the atmosphere for the story. Is there a connection between the weather and the quarrel between husband and wife?

2. In the third paragraph the author steps in directly and says, "He found more than he looked for at Garfield's." What function does this bald statement have in the story?

3. When Mr. Garfield is explaining his experiment with trees, the boy's mother "was looking down with all her longings suddenly plain and naked in her eyes." Can you find any significance in this statement?

4. Does the weather have anything to do with the father's irritability? Does it in any way excuse his actions? Compare him with Mr. Garfield in this respect.

5. What do you think the boy's position is in the struggle between mother and father? What is the struggle actually about?

6. Why does the father shoot the sparrow? Is he in some way jealous of Mr. Garfield?

7. What is significant about the last paragraph? "Leave it right there," she said. 'After a while your father will want to hang it on the barbed wire.'"

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPOSITION AND DISCUSSION

1. Compare the purpose of the irony at the climax of "The Double-Dyed Deceiver" and the purpose of the irony at the climax of "On Saturday Afternoon."

2. What is point of view? Does it have more than one definition? Using examples from the selection in this short story unit, write a paper on the different aspects of point of view.

Suggestions for further short story reading:

"Red" by W. Somerset Maugham

"Two Soldiers" by William Faulkner

"First Confession" by Frank O'Connor

"The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" by A. Conan Doyle